

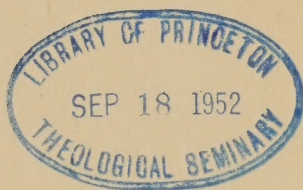
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# History and God

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ARTHUR W. MUNK

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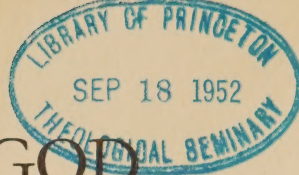


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# HISTORY AND GOD

CLUES TO HIS PURPOSE

By

ARTHUR W. MUNK, B.D., Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ALBION COLLEGE

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DEDICATED TO

THE MEMORY OF THREE TO WHOM I OWE A GREAT DEBT

MY BELOVED MOTHER, LYDIA STAUTZENBERGER MUNK

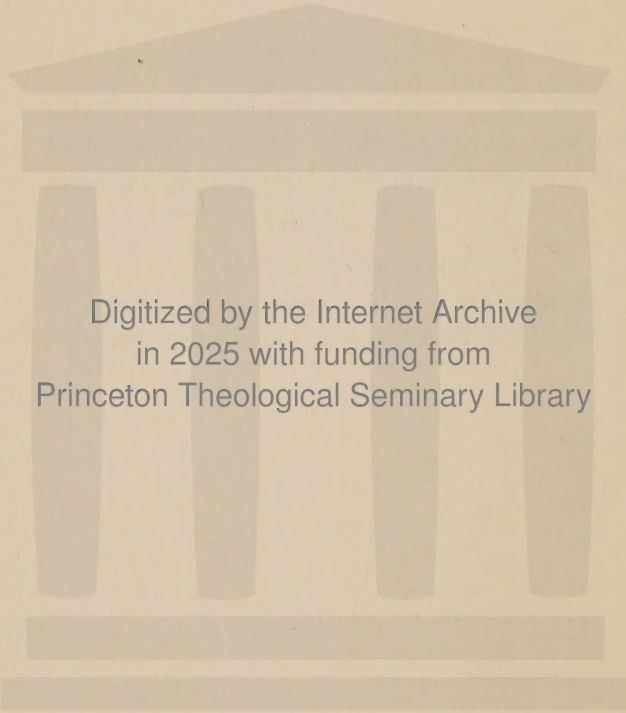
MY REVERED GRANDFATHER, PHILIP STAUTZENBERGER

AND

DR. HERBERT LEE GRAY

MY FIRST TEACHER IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY, GEORGETOWN, TEXAS



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## FOREWORD

To write about the philosophy of history requires hardy courage. Even to live through the history of the 1950's is exacting. To see the vast range of accomplishments and possibilities of human history from the standpoint of philosophic thought is a task which seems both impossible and imperatively necessary. It is impossible: not all the world's historians taken together know all the facts; and no human philosopher is wise enough or sure enough of his first principles to be able to furnish the absolutely right key to the meaning of history, even though a Vico, a Hegel, and in our times, a Spengler, a Toynbee, or a Flewelling may have labored his utmost to the end.

Yet, no difficulty, no impossibility, excuses an intelligent person in our times from facing the imperative demand for action, for decision—for what (without faddishness) may be called the existential confrontation of the vast forces surging through humanity today. The attitudes of too many remind one of Carlyle's quip that the population of his country was "twenty million, mostly fools." Democracy, freedom, and religion will survive only if our country has a large number of citizens who seek a mountain top above the blare and fury of the day-by-day struggle from which to view the great history of which we are a part—to view it and to give it honest and independent thought.

That Dr. Arthur W. Munk has climbed his mountain and has seen history from its peak is evident from his book. He has seen it without being blinded or embittered. The view that he has given from his vantage point is well worth

our seeing, too. He does not think or write pretentiously or dogmatically. He is plainly a man who feels constrained to do his duty as an honest philosophical member of the fellowship of minds, and as a citizen of the American democracy, in imparting his view of history for others to share, to criticize, and to improve, if they can. He blinks no facts, he sugars no difficulties, he evades no objections to his own way of thinking. He is convinced that history may be seen as a great social stream, the direction and ongoing of which is guided not merely by the leaders, presidents, and premiers, but by the overruling purposes of the eternal Divine Person. This Person is not, according to Dr. Munk, just what traditional thought has taken Him to be. He is an eternal spirit, but an eternal spirit that suffers, and through suffering triumphs; whose power cannot rightly be called infinite, but whose love and courage are unfailing. As this view is presented, it merits consideration.

I am glad to commend this book because it unites scope of vision with integrity and insight. It cannot fail to help many readers to see beyond the darkness of the particular night through which the world may be passing. The idealism of this volume is realistic.

EDGAR SHEFFIELD BRIGHTMAN

Boston University

## PREFACE

If the majestic succession of phenomena known as nature is the most magnificent of pageants, then that interesting succession of episodes which men call history is certainly the greatest of dramas. The book which follows is the result of many years of reflection on the ultimate significance of this partly comic, partly tragic, but always meaningful human story.

The seven clues constitute the very core of the book. These did not come to the author as sudden, original flashes of insight, but rather through the stimulation given by many minds far superior to his own. The idea that history is the expression of something deeper and ultimate is common to all the outstanding philosophers of history though they differ as to the nature of that ultimate. Likewise, the dualism running through man and history was evident long ago to Zoroaster, Plato, and St. Paul. In our own day we have especially been made aware of it by the followers of Darwin, with their emphasis on the struggle for existence, and by the Marxians, with their doctrine of history as class struggle.

The vision of a Superhuman Purpose in history, a Kingdom of God, beginning in the midst of time amid these earthly scenes, has been brought to our attention anew by Toynbee. Yet its roots go back to the past to Augustine, and beyond him to Jesus of Nazareth, to the Prophets of Israel, and even to Zoroaster. The idea of a synoptic view of the whole comes from that master of philosophers of history, Hegel. Similarly, the conception of a limited God

is by no means new. Zoroaster and Plato advanced it in their day, and today it is being expounded by many thinkers. Among these, perhaps the most influential, in America at least, is Dr. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, to whom this writer owes much. Finally, the conviction that history must have an ultimate goal which reaches beyond history has its roots in ancient apocalypticism. Among contemporary thinkers, Berdyaev and Niebuhr have especially emphasized this truth and have tried to cast it into modern thought form.

Thus, considered individually, the seven clues are by no means original. Still no thinker has ever taken them as a whole and applied them to history as a whole, as we propose to do. Perhaps this is also the first attempt to apply the sixth clue, the limited God idea, to all of history. At least so the author has been informed by a leading philosopher.

This venture likewise constitutes something of a critique of various interpretations of history. Among the systems criticized is the newer apocalypticism commonly associated with such eminent theologians as Barth and Niebuhr. All forms of naturalism, which constitute the opposite extreme, will also receive their share of criticism. The same applies to other systems, especially to positivism, a philosophy which is so common among historians but which, lacking the courage to search for ultimates, dooms itself to preoccupation with trivialities.

The author's chief aim, however, is constructive. It is not enough to be an iconoclast. A general attack on all systems, without any attempt at reconstruction in terms of a broader synthesis, can only lead to confusion and despair. The method employed is empirical and rational; and the general point of view arrived at, by means of the clues, may be designated as a synoptic, realistic, and personalistic form



of liberalism. The clues, taken as a whole, seem to require a middle-of-the-road position between the two extremes as found in the new apocalypticism on the one hand, and naturalism and positivism on the other. This writer believes that the hope of the future lies with some such chastened form of liberalism. Yet he has learned much from those with whom he disagrees and he gladly acknowledges his debt.

Many friends have helped in many ways to make this venture possible. My colleagues on the faculty of Wesley College were especially kind in reading certain parts of the manuscript and in giving many helpful suggestions. I am also grateful to two of my friends on the faculty of the University of North Dakota, Dr. Richard Beck and Professor Richard Hale, for valuable assistance rendered. Miss Caroline Lybeck, Head of the Circulation Department of the University Library, and her able staff, likewise contributed much by making books and articles available. Finally, I must express my appreciation to Miss Esther Harrison, to Mr. David Knecht for their careful and patient work in typing the final draft, and to Miss Ann Hill for assistance with the proofs.

Appropriate credit is given in the various footnotes to the publishers for their kindness in granting permission to quote from their publications. All Biblical quotations are taken from *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (trans. J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed), published by The University of Chicago Press. If errors have been made in not giving proper credit, those concerned are urged to contact the author or the publishers.

ARTHUR W. MUNK

Albion, Michigan

November, 1951



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PART I

THE APPROACH TO THE CLUES



## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

#### WHAT IS HISTORY?

Face to face with the greatest world crisis of all times, men tend to react in one of four ways. Some are so confused and bewildered that dumb terror is the only possible response. Others seek an escape in various ways. Still others place their faith in nothing but sheer military might. There are also those, however, who, like St. Augustine of old when Rome fell, find themselves so deeply moved that they must again ponder that most fundamental of all questions: What, after all, is the meaning of human existence?

An answer to this question involves the philosophy of history with which this book is concerned. Yet before we can philosophize about history, it is necessary to have a clear understanding as to what is meant by the term. Thus, our first task is to find some satisfactory definition of history itself.

To many, history means the written records, the books of history as compiled by historians. That this view is inadequate becomes apparent at once when we consider the fact that before there could be records, there had to be events. History implies even more than events and records; for events and records, apart from an interpreting mind, have no significance.

History, then, is, first of all, a series of events interpreted by mind. It differs from nature in that in history man, rather than blind, impersonal forces, is the chief actor. At

the same time, history also signifies the fact of connections or relationships between events. For events never occur in isolation. If an utterly unrelated event could occur, it would have no meaning. Actually, events occur in clusters or families. When we speak of the second World War or of American history or of Western civilization, we mean a series of related events. Finally, history is far richer and broader than the life story of any one episode or race or civilization. In the very highest and truest sense, history embraces that totality of related events which constitutes the entire human story.<sup>1</sup>

It is likewise evident that history is definitely related and cannot be understood apart from the realm of nature. Natural history, geological history, and cosmic history furnish the vast background of human history. Nature not only supplies the stage for the grand human drama, but natural events also continually affect, and, to a greater or lesser degree, help to determine and shape historical events. Without the sustaining power of the sun, earth, water, and air, man could not even exist, much less could nations and civilizations develop. The dark, unfriendly forces of nature—earthquakes, storms, floods, diseases, plagues—have likewise greatly influenced the course of history.

While nature and history are by no means the same, yet it is evident that they are fundamentally related. The physical world, in the order of events, comes first as the basis, the foundation upon which history builds. History is the higher order, since it is concerned primarily with man, and not with blind, unconscious forces and processes. It is concerned with the latter only as they affect man, and thus

<sup>1</sup> For an illuminating interpretation of the meaning of the term history, see J. E. Boodin, "Philosophy of History," in D. D. Runes (ed.), *Twentieth Century Philosophy*, pp. 89-91; also R. C. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 7-13.



serve to change the course and pattern of human events. As a result, no philosophy of history can afford to ignore nature. Still, our chief concern must necessarily be man's creative endeavors upon earth and their ultimate significance. This also means that we shall be concerned primarily, not with man's long prehuman and subhuman existence, but with that small, yet extremely important period of history, the last six thousand years during which no less than twenty-six civilizations have come to birth, sixteen of which have perished.<sup>2</sup> Brief as these six thousand years may seem over against the vast, dizzy stretches of cosmic time, over against geological time, or as over against man's prehuman and subhuman existence, yet all that went before may well be nothing more than the prelude to this tragic but magnificent and meaningful drama of man during this brief moment of civilized life.

## TWO APPROACHES TO HISTORY

### 1. *The Historian's Approach*

The historian's approach to history involves two chief aspects: the artistic and the scientific. The artistic signifies his familiar role as the narrator of the human story. As scientist, the historian aims at impartiality; he seeks the truth as far as it is discoverable. In order to do this he must carefully investigate manuscripts, tablets, monuments, inscriptions, and other data which the archaeologist or the anthropologist may put at his disposal. After having gathered this material he must subject it to farther scrutiny, carefully discarding what appears to be false; only then is he ready to put it together into a coherent whole. Both the artistic and the scientific aspects have their place and value. Herodotus,

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IV, p. 1.

the Father of History, excelled in the first, but the colder and more critical Thucydides in the second. Happy the historian who can combine both.<sup>3</sup>

As scientist, the historian may become bold enough to go beyond merely discovering the truth about the past. Since history aims at being a science, and since science tries to generalize and to predict in order that it may control, the historian may go so far as to attempt to designate certain general laws which apply to history as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Toynbee does not hesitate to do this; and it is perfectly legitimate so long as the historian does not suffer from the illusion that he can predict as precisely as can the physicist or the chemist.<sup>5</sup> We may even go farther and insist that the historian, as a specialist in a certain field, is under obligation to shed whatever light he can. Where else can the individual citizen, as well as the statesman, look for expert guidance? How else can they save themselves from utter confusion in the face of the overwhelming mass of seemingly unrelated details which history presents at first glance?

As a matter of fact, history does seem to repeat itself, not in precisely the same way but in certain general ways.<sup>6</sup> If no prediction whatever were possible, then history could teach us nothing and mankind would be in a worse shape than the brutes. Man, because he is man, and not brute, cannot help thinking in terms of the future, and in terms of his destiny

<sup>3</sup> For the historian's method by a historian, see J. T. Shotwell, *An Introduction to the History of History*, pp. 1-9; from the standpoint of the archaeologist, see W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pp. 1-47; for a critical evaluation of methods, see Collingwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-82.

<sup>4</sup> For the methods of science, see L. du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, pp. 12-25.

<sup>5</sup> For the impossibility of absolute exactness, even in physics, see A. S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, pp. ix-xvii, 247-72.

<sup>6</sup> Compare A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 29-41 with Boodin, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-95.

and that of his kind. If he could get no help from the past, no real light on his problems, he would be in a sad plight indeed; for he would consider himself the unhappy victim of blind, inexorable Fate or mere caprice. Yet it seems evident that within limits man is the master of his destiny. By means of the experience of the human race, which has its roots far back in the misty past, man can to an increasing degree determine his future and the future of his kind.

These riddles may be hard to read, but they do tell us plainly what we most need to know. They tell us that our future largely depends upon ourselves. We are not just at the mercy of an inexorable fate.<sup>7</sup>

So far as human destiny on this planet is concerned, the historian has an important task to perform in making available to mankind the experience of the past in terms which can be understood and applied. This does not mean, however, that history as a science can ever hope to be as objective and precise as physics or chemistry, or even biology. For two subjective elements are always involved. The first is the fact that the evidence is never absolute. History rests largely on probability. The events of the past cannot be reproduced, as they actually occurred, for exact verification. In history, strict laboratory methods have little place. Then, in the second place, the historian has to interpret the evidence.<sup>8</sup> Not only does it have to be strained through the subjective processes of the historian's mind, and human minds are never infallible, but also, try as he may, the historian cannot absolutely free himself from personal prejudice and bias. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Gibbon, these giants of the past,

<sup>7</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 41. Used by permission.

<sup>8</sup> For a brilliant analysis of the subjective element involved in this process of interpretation, see Collingwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-302.

were certainly not free from bias. Similarly, one can easily detect prejudice in many modern, self-styled objective historians, especially when it comes to the role which religion has played in history.<sup>9</sup> Objectivity is by no means synonymous with atheism and agnosticism, even though it necessarily abstracts from evaluation.<sup>10</sup> Absolute truth is, then, for the historian, as for the philosopher, an ideal only partially realized.

## 2. *The Philosopher's Approach*

The second approach to history is that of the philosopher. At the very beginning he has to admit his debt to the historian. If he is to build on fact rather than fancy, he must go to the historian—sit humbly at his feet and listen to his account of the human story. More than that, he must give due heed to the generalizations and the predictions which the historian has ventured to make. For the philosopher is concerned with all the facts of human experience, past and present, and also with the best guesses as to the future. He must “contemplate all time and all existence.”<sup>11</sup>

How, then, does the approach of the philosopher of history differ from that of the historian? Not so far as the fundamental facts are concerned. The philosopher, if he is to avoid building aircastles (let it be repeated), must depend upon the historian for the actual facts. Where does the essential difference between the two approaches lie? The difference may be stated best in terms of the basic

<sup>9</sup> On the creative role of religion, see W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 11–26; see also Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–52.

<sup>10</sup> For an interesting criticism of antireligious historians by a theologian, see A. Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*, pp. 95–100.

<sup>11</sup> *The Republic of Plato*, Book VI, 485, trans. and ed. Francis M. Cornford (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 187. Used by permission.

questions which each asks. The historian always asks: What happened? How did it happen? How will it affect and determine future happenings? In other words, he is interested in describing what took place as accurately as possible in order that he may generalize, discover the basic laws of sequence, and make predictions.<sup>12</sup>

The philosopher, on the other hand, is concerned with the deeper metaphysical question: Why? Why should there be such a process as history? Why has it continued over vast ages, and why has such marvelous development taken place? What is its ultimate significance? Is history a mere surface phenomenon, incapable of shedding any light on the dark depths below? Is history merely the result of chance, or of inexorable Fate? Or, it is indeed a Divine Drama with a plot, a plan, and a goal? If it is, then there must be a hidden Master Dramatist, in other words, a God.

At this stage of the venture we need not answer this great final question. It is enough to raise it. In later chapters we hope to find an answer. Nor can anyone doubt its significance, for it is so vitally related to human life and destiny, to our highest hopes and deepest fears. Men may doubt the existence of God, and some have tried to comfort themselves by insisting that it really does not matter. But if there is no God, then there is no great Purpose underlying the basic processes and trends of history and of life. The individual, as well as the race, is on his way, going at a terrific speed, headed nowhere ultimately. In the bitter end, thoroughgoing atheism can only lead to the final despair.

Still our approach, if we are interested in truth, must be empirical and rational; it must begin with facts and hypotheses, not with dogmas. The philosopher, like the explorer,

<sup>12</sup> There are, of course, historians, such as Arnold Toynbee, who are also philosophers.



must take risks. No matter how momentous the issues at stake, he dare not give way to sentiment. After all, mere desire and longing, no matter how fervent and sincere, prove nothing. Errors such as the flat earth, the special creation of man by Divine *Fiat*, witchcraft, and polytheism were once defended with fanatic zeal. Similarly, in our own day, men have defended such fictions as the master race, and the proletariat as the messianic class.

The philosopher, obviously, no less than the scientist, must aim at objectivity. He dare not follow sentiment, convention, mere intuition, or any so-called infallible authority whether that of church, tradition, sacred book, or human leader. Valuable as some of these may be as sources of truth, they have no value as tests of truth.<sup>13</sup> The worst fanaticisms and the most weird phantasies have resulted from the habit of uncritical minds accepting these as absolute guides to truth. "Do not believe every inspired utterance, but test the utterances to see whether they come from God, for many false prophets have come out into the world."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, for the philosopher, as well as for the scientist, there can be but one valid method: the scientific method. By the scientific method, however, is not meant the laboratory method in the narrow sense of the word; that is, the conducting of experiments under controlled conditions. In this narrow sense it is applicable to only a limited number of sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, and the like. It is obvious that the historian can make little use of the

<sup>13</sup> On this question, see E. S. Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, rev. ed., pp. 48-59.

<sup>14</sup> I John 4:1. This and all Biblical quotations from *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, trans. J. M. Powers Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939). Used by permission.



laboratory, for most of the things with which he is concerned occurred long ago.

By the scientific method, as used here, is meant the empirical-rational, inductive-deductive method. It is beyond our purpose to discuss here in detail the scientific method as applicable to philosophy, especially since many able discussions are available in excellent texts on philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Suffice it to say that it consists of at least seven steps: problem, preliminary survey and hypothesis, observation, analysis, synthesis, verification, and reinterpretation as new knowledge comes into view.<sup>16</sup>

### THE ENIGMA OF HISTORY

This brings us to a very important question: the question of the possibility of a philosophy of history. Is it possible through philosophical inquiry to come anywhere near the true, ultimate meaning of the historical process, or, are we merely, like Don Quixote, tilting with windmills? This question is raised so often that it must be faced before we proceed further.

There is a school of philosophers, the positivistic school, which denies that man can, in any sense, discover any ultimate significance in history. The process of history, like nature upon which it is dependent, is too great and complex for the limited mind of man to grasp. The secret of history

<sup>15</sup> See Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-43, and *A Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 116-22; see also C. E. Raven, *Science, Religion, and the Future*, pp. 5-16, 80-90.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, in his *Faith and History*, denies the validity of the empirical approach to history. The meaning of history can only be grasped by a prior Divine gift of faith. But when two such faith philosophies conflict, as they often do, how can we discover which is nearer the truth? There is no other way except by the use of the empirical-rational method. Thus thrown out of the window, it keeps coming back in by the door.

involves the secret of the universe. After all, man can know so little of the phenomenon whose ultimate meaning he seeks to fathom; for most of it is hidden in the dim, misty past. Nor can he be sure of the future, especially the far future. He has only a few chapters of the total story, and, even at best, the human episode seems but an infinitesimal, perhaps unimportant, phase of the universe. Hence it is exceedingly doubtful whether it can shed much light on the meaning of the whole. The best that man can do is to study history, along with nature, as a merely phenomenal process without any attempt at probing its ultimate meaning. In fact, it is a sheer waste of time. According to this school, then, the scientific approach of the historian, and of his colleagues, the political scientist, the sociologist, the archaeologist, and the anthropologist, is the only possible and relevant approach.<sup>17</sup>

At this point it is not necessary to give a full and final answer to this charge of the positivist. This can only be done in later chapters in the light of all the clues. All that is necessary now is to show that the positivist may be unduly dogmatic, and that a metaphysics of history remains as a real possibility.

It must be admitted, at least at the beginning of the philosophic venture, that history, like nature, is something of an enigma. Even after the venture has been made vast continents of mystery remain. Philosophy not only begins in wonder, as Aristotle thought, but it also ends in wonder.<sup>18</sup> The man who has not at times been overcome by the sheer wonder of existence has no right to philosophize. At the same time we must not allow this sense of mystery to lead

<sup>17</sup> For an interesting discussion of the positivistic school, see Albright, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-55; more attention will be given to this school in Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, II, 982b. 9-11, p. 13.

us to despair. Rather, it should challenge us to think, so that, in the final analysis, the mystery which remains is not a mere unfathomable darkness, but one shot through with shafts of light. For while philosophy can never answer all of our questions in any absolute manner, it can certainly make luminous the dark enigma of history and of life so that we need not walk in total darkness.

At any rate, if we should suddenly find ourselves in a cave so dark that we could not see, our natural and rational impulse would not be to shut our eyes. We would keep on trying to see with the hope that when our eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, we would really be able to see, however dimly, and thus find our way. Can we do less in facing the enigma of history and of human existence? After all, if our ancestors had allowed themselves to remain absolutely overwhelmed by the mystery of things, philosophy, religion, art, and the sciences would never have developed. In other words, man has only succeeded as he has responded to the mystery of existence with faith, courage, thought, and action.

It is also true that man, as a rational being, cannot live without sometimes raising the metaphysical question: Why? It is as natural for the child as for the greatest philosopher. In refusing to admit the possible relevance of this question, in deliberately stifling the metaphysical aspects of his nature, is not the positivist in a sense dehumanizing himself, and, in fact, trying vainly to turn back the course of evolution—this strange process that has, at long last, produced a creature capable of such a profound response? For man is as decidedly a metaphysical animal as he is a political or an economic animal.

This very fact that man is a metaphysical animal, gifted with a reflective mind, may itself have profound metaphysi-

cal implications. The very fact that man comes into existence with the capacity for raising ultimate questions, and of attempting to answer them in terms of mighty systems, may be something of a sign that answers are possible. It is impossible to stifle man's metaphysical nature for any length of time, as impossible as to stifle his moral, or religious, or aesthetic nature. Here man seems to come in contact with Reality; and the burden of proof certainly rests on the positivist. Man, through the ages, has asked ultimate questions about nature and history, believing that real answers are possible, and among those who have been the most confident have been the vast majority of the wisest minds that have appeared upon earth.

Even at his best the positivist cannot prove that a metaphysics of history is impossible. All that he can prove is that our knowledge of ultimates is limited, fragmentary, incomplete, and that, therefore, absolute certainty, in the strict mathematical sense, is impossible. This leaves the way open for faith—that is a reasonable, not a blind faith, which comes, not as a mysterious Divine Gift from heaven, but only after we have done a certain amount of looking around and reasoning. It is a faith similar to that which the historian must exercise after he has done his best to ascertain the truth; for history, as we have seen, ultimately rests on probability.

Nor is it necessarily true that since we cannot know the whole of history, and since history is but a fraction of the total cosmic process, that, therefore, it is incapable of shedding light on the whole. One does not have to dip the ocean dry to discover that it is composed of water. Small as it may seem in both space and time, yet history may be such an important and fundamental aspect of the whole that it constitutes a real and genuine revelation of its essential

nature. It may well be that human history, and especially the story of the last six thousand years, is capable of throwing more real light on the meaning and purpose of the universe than all that has gone before. Details are important, but a knowledge of the infinite number of minute details of a process is not necessary in order to understand the fundamental nature of the process. No scientist has ever been able to discern all the details of any natural process, but this does not keep him from discovering the essential nature of processes.

In the realm of personality, this fact is even more significant. One does not have to know all the facts about his friend, from the day of his birth until the present, in order to know his real nature and character as a basis for establishing a meaningful relationship. The same applies to the historical process. One can never, and one need never, know all the facts in order to grasp its essential nature. By a careful and tireless study of the findings of the great historians and philosophers of history, together with personal observations of contemporary trends and events, the student may so acquaint himself with the outstanding characteristics and tendencies of history as to enable him to grasp its essential nature. And on this substantial basis he may speculate fruitfully regarding its ultimate significance.

Finally, it must be said that history, even as nature, and, in fact, even more than nature, forces man to raise the question as to its ultimate meaning. On the one hand, then, we have man, the metaphysical animal, who strangely enough has the capacity of asking, "Why?"; and on the other hand we have history, as well as nature, inspiring him with wonder, and pressing him and challenging him, especially through its crises, to make the metaphysical venture. More than that, history also gives man certain clues, signs which



he may follow with the hope of reaching something like the truth, an approximation of that which is ultimately real.

After a consideration in Chapter 2 of the chief points of view in the philosophy of history, the rest of this book will be devoted to an exploration of the clues, and the relevance of the resulting world view, both to history as a whole and also to the dangerous situation in which modern man finds himself at this present point in history. This whole venture, thus, centers around the seven clues. As by following a mountain spring one eventually arrives at the river into which it flows, and by following the river, one finally reaches the ocean into which it empties, so, likewise, by following these clues our hope is that we shall at last be able to see, even though as a "dim reflection in a mirror,"<sup>19</sup> the ultimate source of this magnificent and intriguing yet mysterious and baffling spectacle which men call history.

The word "clue" or "clew" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *cleowen* or *cliwen*. Originally it seems to have meant a ball of thread or cord used for finding one's way out of a labyrinth. It will be employed in this book according to the meaning given in current dictionaries, viz., an indication, sign, or hint which aids the individual in solving a perplexing problem. In other words, the seven clues constitute signs or intimations which suggest history's ultimate meaning and significance.

One further thing must be made clear. The reader, on seeing the subtitle of this book, is no doubt reminded of John Macmurray's *Clue to History*. This writer is certainly in agreement with Macmurray's thesis that history is a movement toward a goal, the creation of a universal society based on love; but from the standpoint of the philosophy of history, Macmurray's treatment is hardly comprehensive

<sup>19</sup> I Cor. 13:12.



enough; it leaves out too many factors. This present endeavor differs from Macmurray's otherwise excellent work in three essential ways.

First, instead of one clue, seven clues will be followed, all of which must be considered together in order to obtain the fullest possible insight into the ultimate meaning of the whole. Second, while recognizing with Macmurray, in various ways, the significance of the noble Jewish-Christian tradition as the richest source of our civilization at its best, due consideration will also be given to the contributions of all the other great traditions.<sup>20</sup> Third, proper consideration will be given, not only to the teleological facts, but likewise to the dysteleological, since history embodies both. Our purpose is to look at all the facts, pleasant and unpleasant, and, in accordance with the empirical-rational method, to follow wherever the facts may lead.

<sup>20</sup> This writer is aware, of course, that Macmurray's purpose is not to give a comprehensive philosophy of history, but rather to show the significance of the Jewish-Christian tradition in shedding light on the goal of history; see *The Clue to History*, pp. ix-xiii, 112-20.

## Chapter 2

### POINTS OF VIEW

#### BEGINNINGS

Woe be unto the philosopher who sets out on his quest with the delusion that he is breaking an altogether new path. He must constantly remind himself that minds far greater than his own have prepared the way by blazing trails through a once trackless wilderness. Again, it is only as he tries to make their enduring insights his own, standing on their shoulders, as it were, that he can hope to speculate fruitfully. It is because of the necessity of perspective that in this present chapter we shall briefly trace the story of the philosophy of history from its dim, remote, crude beginnings to its modern development in such systems as those of Hegel and Toynbee.

No one knows just when or where men first began to speculate concerning the meaning of history. In fact, its roots are to be found in the primitive belief that the gods are interested in human affairs and tend to take a direct hand at times, especially in the destiny of a favored tribe or race. However, since the philosophy of history implies some more or less unified view of history as a whole, as well as of the universe, it seems that the discipline must have begun in ancient Sumeria, the world's first real civilization. These early Sumerian speculations are especially important, since the Babylonians inherited them, and after developing them further, passed them on to the Hebrews so that they became the basis of the stories of creation, of the flood, and

of the early history of man. The Hebrews, however, as we shall see later, greatly refined these crude myths and tales.<sup>1</sup>

Speculation also began early in ancient Egypt. Moreover, after 1600 B.C., the Egyptian Pharaoh became lord of a vast world empire. This naturally tended to stimulate and broaden the Egyptian mind.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, two hundred years later, during the fourteenth century B.C., we find Ikhnaton proclaiming a universal religion, a genuine monotheism. Aton is the sole God, the Creator and Ruler of all lands.<sup>3</sup> This constitutes at least a philosophy of history in the germ ready to develop with the appearance of another creative genius. Unfortunately, in all the land of Egypt there was no one great enough or bold enough to follow in the footsteps of Ikhnaton. As a result, reaction set in, and thus the world's first attempt at monotheism failed.

### EARLY HEBREW TYPES

The Hebrews did not build philosophical systems like the Greeks, nor were they interested in abstract speculations. They were deeply interested, however, in life and in the problems which arise out of life situations. Hence they were interested in the meaning of history. Moreover, situated as they were between the Babylonian and Egyptian cultures, they could not fail to be greatly stimulated and influenced. It is to the Hebrews, then, that one must look for the most significant early developments in the philosophy of history. For along with the other factors favorable

<sup>1</sup> For early Sumerian and Babylonian speculations, see *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 483-85; and *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, pp. 120-21.

<sup>2</sup> See J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, pp. 207-22, 272-76.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 277-302.

to the development of a philosophy of history, which have already been mentioned, the Hebrews achieved monotheism early, and more than that, they believed that Yahweh took a hand in the affairs of men, especially in the fortunes and destiny of his favorite, Israel.

The first philosopher of history among the Hebrews was the author of what is known as the J documents. About 850 B.C. he gathered together a vast collection of material, myths of creation, traditions, stories of great heroes, songs and ballads, and wove them into a narrative; but his aim was not merely to tell a story, and certainly not to write a history in the modern sense. He aimed at nothing less than showing the mighty workings of God, especially in the history of Israel. From a modern standpoint many of his ideas appear crude and even childish. His conception of God is extremely anthropomorphic at times,<sup>4</sup> and the whole work is animated by the spirit of nationalism. He traces the history of Israel from the beginnings with Abraham to the reign of David, and Israel is always at the center as the special object of the Divine purpose and concern.

Nevertheless, J is important as a philosopher of history. Even though he is not a thoroughgoing monotheist, yet he prepares the way for monotheism by setting the whole story of Israel into a universal framework. He begins his story, not with Abraham, but with the creation of the world and of man by Yahweh. Moreover, Yahweh, in spite of his jealous and inscrutable nature, is the God of righteousness who demands absolute obedience and who does not hesitate to punish even the Chosen People when they are stubborn and disobedient. He is not bound, like the heathen gods, to prosper his people regardless of their conduct. Again, in the J document there is one supreme event which

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Gen. 2:4-3:24.

stands out mountainlike. It is the story of the remarkable deliverance from Egyptian bondage under Moses. Here Yahweh, as nowhere else, had demonstrated his Providence, his mighty power to save.<sup>5</sup>

About a century later another writer, known as the Elohist, the author of the E documents, gathered together other stories with a purpose similar to that of J. He is decidedly more ethical and less anthropomorphic in his conception of God, but he is more nationalistic. There is no universal setting for his story. In fact, he does not begin his narrative until the time of Abraham, and his central purpose seems to be that of showing that God is Israel's Ruler and Lawgiver who led the nation from the days of Abraham to the invasion and conquest of the promised land.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after E wrote his narrative, there arose among the Hebrews one of the most significant movements in all history, the Prophetic Movement. This movement began with Amos about 750 B.C. Here for the first time we have real universalism. Yahweh is interested and active in the life of all the nations and is concerned for their welfare.<sup>7</sup> He is also the Judge of all nations and will execute his righteous sentence against those who have dealt cruelly with their neighbors.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly fifty years later the first Isaiah, perplexed by the fact that the pagan Assyrians were lording it over Yahweh's people, made a daring pronouncement. To the taunt of the idol worshippers that the Assyrian gods were stronger than Yahweh, Isaiah answers that Yahweh, as God of all the earth and of all nations, is making use even of this ruthless conqueror as a means toward achieving his purposes.

<sup>5</sup> For J, see J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, pp. 60-73; and E. S. Brightman, *The Sources of the Hexateuch*, pp. 19-111.

<sup>6</sup> See Bewer, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-86; and Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-202.

<sup>7</sup> Amos 9:7.

<sup>8</sup> Amos 1:3-2:8.

Yahweh, unknown to the proud, boasting Assyrian, is using him as an instrument of judgment, but as soon as he has accomplished these purposes and the power-mad tyrant is of no more use, he will meet his just doom as a consequence of overreaching himself.

O Assyria, rod of my anger,  
And staff of my fury!  
Against a godless nation I send him,  
And against the people of my wrath I charge him.

But not so does he think,  
And not so does he plan;  
For destruction is in his mind,  
And to cut off nations not a few.

Shall an ax boast over the man that hews with it,  
Or a saw lord itself over the man that plies it?  
As though a rod were to sway the man that wields it,  
Or a staff were to wield what is not wood! <sup>9</sup>

Likewise, Jeremiah held that the king of Babylon was an instrument in the hands of God.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the Second Isaiah also sees Cyrus, the Persian, as the instrument, not of judgment this time, but to effect the return of the Exiles as a prelude to Israel's future glory and as a means of salvation for all mankind.<sup>11</sup>

Since the Prophets of Israel are among the great pioneers in the philosophy of history, many elements are found implicit in their teachings which become explicit in certain of the later and more developed types. Their chief contribution lies in their conviction that history is a teleological process, that God is the Lord of history, that He works on a

<sup>9</sup> Isa. 10:5-6<sup>a</sup>, 7, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Jer. 27. Jeremiah prophesied about 626-586 B.C.; see A. C. Knudson, *The Beacon Lights of Prophecy*, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> Isa. 45:18-24; Second or Deutero-Isaiah prophesied about 540-537 B.C.; see Knudson, *op. cit.*, p. 247; and J. M. P. Smith, *The Prophets and Their Times*, p. 219.



universal scale, and that in the end His just and righteous Will triumphs within history. Sometimes, as in their conception of the "Day of Yahweh," they so greatly emphasize His judgment as seemingly to leave little hope for the future. Nevertheless, most of them saw a splendid dawn beyond the night of doom. Sometimes they see this better day coming by means of an ideal king of the old Davidic line whom Yahweh will send,<sup>12</sup> but again at other times the new age will dawn as the result of Yahweh's direct intervention in human affairs.<sup>13</sup> At any rate, this hope of a better day is nowhere more aptly expressed than in the following noble lines which truly constitute the first and best expression of man's agelong dream:

It shall come to pass in days to come,  
That the mountain of the Lord's house will be  
Established as the highest mountain,  
And elevated above the hills.  
Peoples will stream unto it,  
And many nations will come, and say:  
"Come, let us go up to the mount of the Lord,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
That he may instruct us in his ways,  
And that we may walk in his paths;  
For from Zion goes forth instruction,  
And the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."  
Then shall he judge between many peoples,  
And arbitrate for great nations, at a distance;  
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning-hooks.  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Nor shall they learn war any more.  
And they shall sit each under his vine,  
And under his fig tree, with none to frighten them;  
For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> As in Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-8.

<sup>13</sup> As in Isa. 40:1-11.

<sup>14</sup> Micah 4:1-4.

Brief mention must likewise be made of certain other movements which also have significance for the philosophy of history. The first of these was the Deuteronomic movement out of which came the Deuteronomic School of Historians. About a century after the prophets Amos and Hosea had spoken, and about forty or fifty years after the first Isaiah, a great leader and thinker of the prophetic party wrote the Book of Deuteronomy. His one fundamental purpose is to prove that the past history of Israel shows that loyalty to Yahweh and his worship at one central shrine alone will save the little country of Judah from ruin. In accordance with the custom of ascribing books to ancient worthies, he puts the words of the book upon the lips of Moses. This strategy succeeded beyond all expectations, for not only did it bring about the religious reformation of King Josiah in 621 B.C., but what was more, the Book of Deuteronomy was accepted as Scripture, and thus the basis for the Old Testament canon was laid.<sup>15</sup>

It also stimulated a group of writers, the so-called Deuteronomic School of Historians, to produce similar books as well as to revise and edit some of the older ones. Out of this came such books as Joshua, Judges, and the books of Samuel and Kings, all written to show God's Providence in the history of the Chosen People, that is, both his power to punish disobedience and to reward the faithful.<sup>16</sup> Still later came the priestly redaction of the Pentateuch and the addition of the magnificent account of the creation as found in Genesis 1:1-2:3. Finally, about 300-250 B.C., the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, all with a decided interest in history as the sphere of God's Providence, took

<sup>15</sup> See Bewer, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-35.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-33; The Deuteronomic Historians always made use of earlier sources, often merely revising older books.

shape.<sup>17</sup> Thus it can be truly said that a large part of the Old Testament is nothing short of a kind of philosophy of history.<sup>18</sup>

### APOCALYPTIC TYPES

Next to the ancient Hebrew prophetic types, the apocalyptic view of history is undoubtedly the oldest. It has five outstanding characteristics. First, so far as the issues of history are concerned, human agency counts for little; the Divine Agent is all important. Second, it is actuated by a profound mundane pessimism. There is no hope of social redemption through human and Divine cooperation, for the world is destined to become worse and worse. Redemption can only come from above through Divine intervention. Third, it tends to look upon history as a unity from the morning of creation to the day of doom. In fact, Charles goes so far as to say: "Apocalyptic and not prophecy was the first to grasp the great idea that all history, alike human, cosmological, and spiritual, is a unity."<sup>19</sup> Fourth, it views history in terms of a great drama with a beginning, a period of more or less rapid movement toward an end or goal, and a catastrophic ending. Fifth, beyond doom it sees dawn, the coming of the new age. This new age may be conceived quite materialistically in terms of a transformed earth that is restored to its pristine state as it was before the fall of man and the curse; or it may be conceived in terms of a spiritual kingdom which can come into its own only after the destruction of the wicked earth.

<sup>17</sup> See *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> Even some of the Psalms, such as 105 and 107.

<sup>19</sup> R. H. Charles, *Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), p. 24. Used by permission.

The apocalyptic view has its roots in the prophetic. The earliest traces among the Hebrews are to be found in Amos 5:18-20, in his graphic description of the "Day of Yahweh." This idea of the "Day of Yahweh" is developed even farther in the Book of Isaiah.<sup>20</sup> In fact, it was this idea which later, after it had developed with the aid of foreign influences, made it easier for the Hebrews to arrive at a full-blown apocalypticism.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, apocalypticism proper did not begin with the Hebrews, and certainly not with the eighth- and seventh-century Prophets. It probably began in Persia with Zoroaster.<sup>22</sup> He held that there were two superhuman powers: Ahura Mazda, the God of Light, and Angra Mainyu, the Spirit of Darkness. These two were conceived as in perpetual conflict until the time would come when Ahura Mazda would triumph. Out of this idea arose the whole Zoroastrian eschatology with its vivid description of the great world struggle, the banishment of Angra Mainyu, the purification of all souls, the establishment of a new earth free from the curse of evil, and even the destruction of Hell itself.<sup>23</sup>

Stimulated by Persian influences on the one hand, and by the urgent need for an explanation of the evils which had overtaken the Chosen People on the other, the latent Jewish apocalypticism burst into full bloom during the second century B.C. It continued until after the first century B.C. The best known of these Jewish apocalypses are

<sup>20</sup> Especially Isa. 2:5-22.

<sup>21</sup> For apocalypticism among the later prophets, see Joel 2:1-11; 3:9-18.

<sup>22</sup> Scholars do not agree as to the date of Zoroaster. Some think he was born as early as 1000 B.C., others about 660 B.C.; see E. D. Soper, *The Religions of Mankind*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>23</sup> *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 30-31, 842-43.

the Book of Daniel, I Enoch, II Enoch, II Baruch, and IV Ezra.<sup>24</sup>

Jewish apocalypticism in turn stimulated the early Christians. It was easy for them to identify Jesus with the supernatural Son of Man of the Book of Daniel, and they confidently expected him to return in triumph on the clouds of heaven. There is a strong apocalyptic element running through the first three Gospels, but the most truly apocalyptic element in the Gospels is Mark 13 which may be a strange mixture of genuine sayings of Jesus and a Jewish or Jewish-Christian apocalypse.<sup>25</sup> It is impossible to say how far Jesus himself shared these views. That he was strongly influenced by this type of thought and often used apocalyptic language there can be no doubt, but it was certainly not as central as Schweitzer and others have tried to lead us to think. Jesus may have used the thought forms of apocalypticism without subscribing to the doctrine in the crass materialistic sense of some of his interpreters. That he may have conceived his return in spiritual and not materialistic terms may be implied in Luke 17:20-21.<sup>26</sup>

Apocalypticism is certainly evident in Paul,<sup>27</sup> but he also seems to have given it something of a spiritual interpretation.<sup>28</sup> The most literalistic and materialistic representation of the apocalyptic view, at least so far as the New Testament is concerned, is undoubtedly the Book of Revelation. Here one finds a fully developed apocalypticism, a

<sup>24</sup> For Jewish apocalypses, see Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-52; and *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 30, 255-56.

<sup>25</sup> *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, pp. 1014-15.

<sup>26</sup> For Jesus and apocalypticism, see E. F. Scott, *The Purpose of the Gospels*, pp. 30-31, 68-72; and C. C. McCown, *The Search for the Real Jesus*, pp. 237-57.

<sup>27</sup> Especially II Thess. 2. As to its authenticity, see *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 1270.

<sup>28</sup> I Cor. 15:35-58.



lurid picture of the process of world destruction, but the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth is described in terms that are truly beautiful and majestic.<sup>29</sup>

The greatest book on the philosophy of history based upon the apocalyptic view is, of course, St. Augustine's *City of God*. The immediate situation which caused him to write this very influential book was that great tragedy, the sack of Rome by Alaric and his Goths in A.D. 410. St. Augustine wrote to refute the charge of the pagans that this calamity had befallen the beloved city because of the neglect of the old gods. His answer is threefold. First, he reminds them that the city would have fared far worse had the barbarians not already been softened by Christian influences.<sup>30</sup> Second, the fall of Rome was inevitable because of the moral decay due in a large measure to the immorality encouraged by the old religions.<sup>31</sup> And third, the old gods are powerless and absolutely unreliable.<sup>32</sup>

St. Augustine goes on from there and tries to view the problem from a universal standpoint. Basing his view on the old Genesis story of J, he insists that sin entered the world when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and that it has been active ever since. In fact, in this present world there are really two cities existing side by side. One is the city of sin; the other is the holy city of God. History is conceived as a great drama moving on to the Day of Judgment when the two cities will be severed forever. The inhabitants of the worldly city will go to perdition, but the inhabitants of the city of God will enjoy heavenly bliss forever.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> For an interesting and scholarly study of Revelation, see E. F. Scott, *The Book of Revelation*.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, Book I, chap. i, pp. 3-6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Book II, chap. xxv, pp. 93-95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Book II, chap. xxiii, pp. 87-89.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Book XVI, chap. i, pp. 174-76.



From the days of the early Christians, apocalypticism has haunted the church, sometimes breaking out in rather lurid and fantastic forms. There are still many sects which make it one of their chief tenets.<sup>34</sup> However, thoughtful Christianity has left the older forms behind. Though apocalypticism was once the generally accepted Christian philosophy of history, it is no longer tenable. Nevertheless, in the Barthian theology with its wholly transcendent God, its Calvinistic emphasis on the unworthiness of man, and its doctrine of crisis, one can detect a kind of revival of apocalypticism in modern garb.<sup>35</sup> It is, however, very different from the older forms, since Barth accepts the canons of modern scientific Biblical criticism. Barthianism is a highly sophisticated type which no literalist could possibly accept.

In our own day, another and even more unusual form of apocalypticism has emerged—Marxian communism. Hitherto all the forms of apocalypticism have been associated with the idea of a transcendent God, who, as the Lord of history, orders this strange drama and finally brings it to a cataclysmic ending; but Marxian communism has no place for such a God. In place of God it enthrones the economic and social forces of history as supreme, especially the former. While it is true that Marx, unlike some of his followers, did leave some place for human ideas as creative forces, yet no one can doubt that even for him the really decisive forces which shape human history are the materialistic. In contrast to Hegel's idealism, Marx says in his preface to his second edition of *Capital*: "With me, on the

<sup>34</sup> For these cruder forms, see *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 491-92.

<sup>35</sup> For an interesting example of Barth's apocalypticism, see "There Shall Be Signs," in K. Barth and E. Thurneysen, *God's Search for Man*, pp. 143-57. R. Niebuhr must also be classed as an apocalypst, but his form is much milder than Barth's. For differences between Niebuhr and Barth, see especially Niebuhr, "We Are Men and Not God," *Christian Century*, October 27, 1948, pp. 1138-40.

contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.”<sup>36</sup> Again, Marx and Engels say:

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life? What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed?<sup>37</sup>

Marxian communism is more than an economic or social or political theory. It embodies a philosophy—dialectical materialism. It is frankly materialistic and naturalistic. While it does not deny the reality of mind and values as subjective factors, yet it denies their ontological significance. Matter or nature is the final reality from which all things derive. There is nothing beyond the system of nature. Moreover, it is dialectical materialism because the Marxist holds that the material and social forces which shape history move inevitably in a certain direction and also according to a certain pattern.<sup>38</sup>

The question may arise: If Marxian communism is based upon a materialistic metaphysics, then is it not so completely out of accord with apocalypticism, as it has developed historically, that it becomes confusing to place it under this general type? The answer is that Marxian communism has so much in common with apocalypticism that it is very illuminating to treat it as at least a kind of foster-

<sup>36</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. F. Engels, rev. E. Untermann, trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling (in the Modern Library; New York: Random House, Inc., 1936), p. 25. Used by permission.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Marx and F. Engels, “The Communist Manifesto,” in Albert R. Chandler, *The Clash of Political Ideals* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1940), p. 176. Used by permission.

<sup>38</sup> J. Somerville, *Soviet Philosophy*, pp. 149-77.

daughter of this general point of view.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to see in how many different ways the two are alike.

In the first place, while apocalypticism in the past has always been associated with religion, Marxian communism likewise is related to religion, particularly to Judaism and Christianity. Communism has at least three important things in common with these religious systems, namely, its realization of the importance of history, its passionate devotion to social justice, and its opposition to racial discrimination. Bennett even goes so far as to say: "It has often been pointed out that Communism could only have been developed on soil prepared by Christianity."<sup>40</sup> Arnold Toynbee calls it "a Christian heresy, a leaf torn out of the book of Christianity and treated as if it were the whole gospel."<sup>41</sup>

Then, in the second place, as the apocalypst has as his absolute a transcendent God whose power completely determines the course of history according to a certain pattern, so likewise the Marxian Communist finds his absolute in the material and social forces and their inevitable tendency to work together in fixed and predictable ways. History is a process moving on through certain stages toward a goal. As the ancient religions fell before the onslaught of Christianity, Christian theology before rationalism, feudalism before capitalism, so likewise capitalism in its turn is destined to fall before a triumphant Marxian communism.<sup>42</sup> It is the faith in this absolute that gives confirmed communists their fanatical devotion and their tremendous driving power. This is something like the religious feeling of being

<sup>39</sup> For this insight I am especially indebted to my colleague, Dr. Hubert N. Dukes.

<sup>40</sup> John C. Bennett, *Christianity and Communism* (New York: Association Press, 1948), p. 46. Used by permission.

<sup>41</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 221. Used by permission.

<sup>42</sup> Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-78.

in harmony with the will of an omnipotent God. The Communist feels that he is in harmony with the universe.

Third, Marxian communism, like apocalypticism, has its Messiah. That Messiah is the chosen people, the proletariat. All history, basically, is really a class struggle out of which this class will at last emerge victorious.<sup>43</sup> Fourth, like all good apocalypsts, Marxian Communists hold that there will come, as there must come, a time of catastrophic change. When the proletariat, feeling its strength, seeks the power which rightfully belongs to it, the old privileged bourgeois class will resist; but after a period of bitter struggle, the revolution, the Messiah will overthrow Satan and will cast him into the lake of fire. Finally, and most interesting of all, the Marxian believes, not unlike the apocalypst, that after Satan has been banished and the proper changes have been made, a new age will dawn.

Their predictions as to the glories of this new age rival that of the wildest millenarian. A classless society will arise in which people will be so inclined to observe the elementary rules of social life that the state, that special apparatus of compulsion, will gradually disappear.<sup>44</sup> This involves a very optimistic view of human nature indeed; but underlying it is, of course, the materialistic doctrine that the environment molds the individual so that if he is given an ideal environment in which all of his economic and social wants are satisfied, he will behave himself.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 159-60, 168-70, 176-78.

<sup>44</sup> N. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (excerpt), in Chandler, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>45</sup> See, however, Lenin, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-90. Here he seeks to defend Marxian communism against the charge of utopianism by insisting that the state will only disappear in the final stage when the new order has banished the chief causes of crime. On p. 185 he insists that some form of group discipline will take care of whatever minor disturbances may appear. He also seems to rely on habit and custom as a means of insuring order. See pp. 183-84.

Next to the prophetic, then, the apocalyptic view of history seems to be the oldest, and, in certain respects, the most fruitful, especially in that it conserved the teleological view of history in ancient times before the rise of the modern concept of evolution. And today, even though the older form of apocalypticism is passing away, yet the most dynamic force in the world is its strange foster-daughter whom Toynbee rightly calls "the Marxian materialist apocalypse."<sup>46</sup>

### FATALISTIC TYPES

The third general point of view in the philosophy of history is the fatalistic. There are a number of varieties, but all forms of fatalism have one distinguishing factor in common. They all hold that Fate, conceived in terms of inevitable necessity, is the determining factor in history. Hence, for thoroughgoing fatalism, there is no real freedom in history. Fate may be conceived either as impersonal in terms of a system or web of natural law or in terms of a blind unconscious will; or it may even be personified in terms of the conscious but arbitrary will of the gods or of God. Again, it need not of necessity be pessimistic, but as a matter of fact it usually is, especially when Fate is understood in impersonal terms.

There are traces of fatalism in primitive religion. The two best examples are the Teutonic belief in the *Götterdämmerung* and the Greek belief in the Necessity to which even Zeus is in some measure subject.<sup>47</sup> The idea of Fate is also associated with astrology, that pseudoscience which

<sup>46</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), Vol. V, p. 24. Used by permission.

<sup>47</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, pp. 772-773.



began in ancient Babylon. The idea that the stars determine human destiny has come down to modern times. Even Wallenstein and Napoleon believed in their stars.<sup>48</sup>

Among the philosophers, the ancient Stoics at times turned the idea of Providence into inexorable Fate. Antipater went so far as to identify God with Fate, and Epictetus insisted that God's Will is inevitable.<sup>49</sup> Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity have made very little use of the term. In fact, St. Augustine explicitly rejects the Stoic idea of Necessity.<sup>50</sup> However, St. Augustine, like St. Paul before him, is not always consistent. Both upon occasion teach predestination and so magnify the omnipotent, inscrutable Will of a transcendent God that they come within an inch of the idea of Fate under another name.<sup>51</sup> In other words, they laid the basis for Calvinism which in its extreme forms strangely resembles fatalism.

Among the religions, Islam, in certain respects, comes nearest to fatalism. Mohammedans certainly believe that Allah is good, benevolent, merciful, as the Koran abundantly testifies.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, on the whole, Allah's transcendence is so exaggerated that it is easy for Moslems to conceive him as a kind of oriental potentate sitting on a throne and issuing his inscrutable decrees. Moreover, among the masses, there is the idea of kismet. Kismet is an Arabic word meaning lot, distribution, or Fate. For Moslems it signifies the inscrutable will of Allah which they believe has so ordered every man's destiny that little can be done to change or alter it.<sup>53</sup> Some of Islam's theologians have also

<sup>48</sup> On astrology, see *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. II, pp. 795-800.

<sup>49</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, p. 789.

<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *op. cit.*, Book V, chap. i, p. 215.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Book XI, chap. xxvii, pp. 264-65; for Paul, see Rom. 9:14-26.

<sup>52</sup> See *The Koran*, Sura LXXIII, 14.

<sup>53</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII, pp. 738-39.



been guilty of so magnifying Allah as First Cause as to make his will in reality the absolute and only cause of everything. Some of the greatest theologians, however, such as Ghazālī, have struggled valiantly to find a place for human freedom within the system.<sup>54</sup>

It is in terms of the famous cycle theory that fatalism as a philosophy of history has played its most important role, and in this form it shares with the prophetic and the apocalyptic view the honor of being one of the oldest philosophies of history. In fact, outside of Zoroastrianism and Judaism, it is the outstanding ancient view. According to this theory, the universe moves through certain cycles or stages. Usually the Golden Age comes at the beginning of each cycle, but as time goes on the earth grows old and everything becomes worse and worse until the cycle has run its course and the whole process starts all over again. This idea of the eternal recurrence is an important element in the cycle theory.

Fatalism had its beginning either with the astrologers of ancient Babylon or among the Hindus. The Hindu cycle theory is closely related to the doctrine of karma or rebirths.<sup>55</sup> Both individuals and the universe go through cycles of rebirths. According to the Hindu view, each cycle is composed of four ages, each age lasting twelve thousand divine years, equal to 4,320,000 human years. The Buddhist cycle begins with the age of destruction, proceeds through four long stages to the age of perfection, and then back to the evil age and destruction again. The Jain cycle, on the other hand, begins with an ideal age four hundred trillion oceans of time in length, then declining through six ages, finally, after six ages more have

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 794-95.

<sup>55</sup> *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 213, 337-38.

elapsed, again reaches the starting point, the Golden Age.<sup>56</sup>

The Greeks were interested in nature, in man, in esthetics, in ethics, and in political theory, but they made no great contributions to the philosophy of history. The chief reason for this is the fact that they seem to have accepted the cycle theory rather early. Obviously, if history is nothing more than a weary repetition of the same thing, with little or nothing new, there is really nothing to arouse our interest. The cycle theory was probably borrowed by the Greeks from the Babylonians, but it was propounded by Hesiod in terms of his famous four ages: the golden, silver, brazen, <sup>heroic</sup> and iron.

Even Plato accepted this theory of history. While there are a number of allusions to cycles in the *Laws*,<sup>57</sup> the idea is most fully developed in *The Statesman*. Here, curiously enough, Plato insists that God periodically withdraws himself from the world, leaving the controls in the hand of Necessity. Whenever he does so, conditions gradually become worse because Fate and Desire are in control; and as the end of the cycle is reached, terrible catastrophes sweep over the world, wiping out life. After the cycle has run its fatal course, however, God again takes control, men and animals again spring into existence, the earth resumes its pristine beauty, and universal peace exists, among animals as well as men, during this blissful age. Nevertheless, the time comes again when God must leave, and thus the cycle decreed by Fate repeats itself.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most interesting developments of the cycle theory is that of the Italian, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744). Though his works are not too well known, yet he is

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>57</sup> *The Laws of Plato*, Book III, 677-680, pp. 55-60.

<sup>58</sup> Plato, *The Statesman* (13-16), pp. 20-27.

certainly one of the most original thinkers so far as the philosophy of history is concerned. Since so many tendencies appear in his view of history, it is difficult to identify him exclusively with any one type. In discussing other types we shall refer to him again. Vico held that there are three stages in human history which continually reappear. The first is the age of the gods. Fear made the gods, and this primitive fear working hand in hand with the imagination gradually built up a world of gods. The age of the gods is followed by the age of heroes. This is the age when strong men rule, aristocracy is the form of government, slavery appears, bards like Homer sing their songs, and a primitive form of theology, philosophy, and literature comes into existence. The third age, the age of men, is characterized by democracy, freedom, the humanization of religion, and social reform; but it also marks the beginnings of decay in the form of religious and moral skepticism, luxury, injustice, and class warfare. The final result is that the nation is subdued by external enemies or sinks back into barbarism. The rise, decline, and fall of Rome constitute Vico's chief illustration.

For Vico, however, decay and destruction are not the end. The cycle repeats itself. After the fall of Rome, history did not come to a stop. The age of the gods, the Dark Ages, is followed by the age of heroes, the Middle Ages, and the age of heroes in turn by the age of man, the modern age.<sup>59</sup> Here, undoubtedly, we have the cycle theory; but with a minimum of fatalism, since Vico certainly believed in God's Providence, and since each repetition of the cycle really constitutes a higher level of development than the previous.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> See C. A. Ellwood, *A History of Social Philosophy*, pp. 143-45.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46; *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. XXVII, p. 65.

The best modern example of the cycle theory, in the thoroughgoing fatalistic sense, is Oswald Spengler in his *Decline of the West*. Spengler does not believe that history in any sense constitutes a unity, nor does he see any signs of progress onward and upward toward a goal. Instead, he thinks in pluralistic terms of many cultures here and there and yonder firmly attached to the "soil of a mother-region."<sup>61</sup> Spengler is a thoroughgoing relativist: "Truths are truths only in relation to a particular mankind."<sup>62</sup> The same holds true concerning his view of moral standards. Everything is relative to a particular culture; it has no universal significance.<sup>63</sup>

Spengler thinks of cultures as organisms whose life history goes through the cycles of birth, childhood, youth, maturity, and old age and death.<sup>64</sup> He also uses the analogy of the seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter. History is rigidly determined. No nation or society can free itself from the blind decrees of Fate. Speaking of civilizations, he says: "They are an end, irrevocable, yet by inward necessity reached again and again."<sup>65</sup> He even goes so far in his fatalism as to say: "Real history is heavy with fate but free of laws."<sup>66</sup>

Spengler has had a great influence, especially in Nazi Germany. One can readily see how his philosophical and moral relativism, his emphasis upon the role of individual cultures, his cynicism, together with his admiration for strong men, fit in well with Nazi ideology. Nevertheless, it is because of his daring, his brilliant style, and finally be-

<sup>61</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles T. Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1926), p. 21. This and all following quotations used by permission.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

cause, aside from a possible grain of truth, his ideas fit in so well with the pessimism and cynicism of our times, that his influence has spread so far beyond Germany. In fact, it was Spengler who, more than any other thinker, aroused Toynbee, something after the manner in which Hume aroused Kant.<sup>67</sup>

Many forms of naturalism are also decidedly fatalistic.<sup>68</sup> One of the most interesting of these is Max Nordau's, as expounded in his *Interpretation of History*. He insists that reason can discover no real signs of purpose in history; therefore there is no God. The universe is nothing but the confused chaos of contending forces without any aim or purpose, and human life is no more than an insignificant incident or episode.<sup>69</sup> Within history itself, it is true that a certain amount of progress has been achieved, that is, man has gained knowledge by means of which he has been able to control and use certain of the secrets of nature for his benefit. This has to some extent enhanced human life and made it more desirable and valuable.<sup>70</sup> Outside this limited sphere of human endeavor, Fate reigns supreme. He conceives the universe in quite fatalistic fashion as consisting of nothing but a vast, ceaseless, endless series of cycles.<sup>71</sup>

There are also certain other philosophies, not necessarily cyclical or naturalistic, which also may be classed with fatalism. Among these belongs the pessimistic philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Schopenhauer held that the world is not the product of God's intelligent and benevolent will, but rather that the creative source of all things is a blind, unconscious, irrational will. This will man-

<sup>67</sup> See Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 9-15.

<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, in fact, all thoroughgoing naturalistic systems cannot escape some form of fatalism.

<sup>69</sup> M. Nordau, *The Interpretation of History*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333-49.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.



ifests itself in all things, material objects, plant life, animal life, but most fully in man, and especially in man's will to live. It has no real plan or goal or purpose except desire. Thus man is in the grip of something which certainly resembles Fate, and from this Fate there is only one narrow avenue of escape which only a few have been fortunate enough to discover. This means of escape is the denial of the will through self-forgetful absorption in art and a kind of mystical contemplation and resignation.<sup>72</sup>

### ILLUSIONISTIC TYPES

The fourth general type or point of view may be called the illusionistic. As the name indicates, all who hold this view tend to look upon history as more or less of an illusion. There are, however, two general types which may be designated as the extreme and the milder or moderate, and these in turn fall into many varieties. We shall begin with the extreme type.

This type undoubtedly had its beginning in India. It finds expression in some of the Upanishads which were written as early as 600–500 B.C.;<sup>73</sup> but it finds its classic expression in the system of Shankara, the great Hindu sage who was born about A.D. 800. For Shankara there is but one Reality, Brahman, the impersonal absolute from which all things come and to which they return. Brahman alone is real. The physical world and all events which take place within it, while possessing a kind of subjective or phenomenal reality, are really *maya*, illusion. They have no ontological significance whatever; that is, they can throw no

<sup>72</sup> A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Book IV, 57, 58, 68, in B. Rand, *Modern Classical Philosophers*, pp. 658–71.

<sup>73</sup> See R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 6; as an example of illusionism see Śvetasvatra Upanishad 4.10.



light on the problem of the nature of ultimate reality. They belong to the world of time and change, while the ultimate is permanent and unchanging.<sup>74</sup> Hence for Shankara, as for all illusionists, history has no metaphysical implications whatever. Its ever-changing scenes tend to obscure and hide rather than reveal the ultimate.

This extreme view is also evident among the Greeks, especially in the philosophy of Parmenides, who flourished during the fifth century B.C. and taught that individuality, time, change, and motion are really illusions of the senses. Deeper knowledge, on the other hand, shows that Reality is One great changeless, motionless, eternal Being.<sup>75</sup> There are also signs of illusionism in Plato's sharp distinction between the world of concrete events and the eternal Patterns or Ideas. This aspect of Plato's thought was carried to the extreme by the Neoplatonists, especially by Plotinus (A.D. 205-270). Plotinus did not deny the existence of the material world. Matter has some kind of existence, but by combining Platonism with oriental mysticism, he placed so much emphasis on the Eternal, Timeless Universe of pure thought, and on the mystical experience of unity with the One, that history, the world of events in time and space, becomes something of a shadow.<sup>76</sup>

A number of modern philosophers show signs of illusionism. Kant was by no means an out-and-out illusionist. In his little book *Eternal Peace*, as we shall see later, he developed something of a philosophy of history. However, on the whole, so far as his system is concerned, he did not show too much interest in history. In fact, in his rather decided distinction between the world of phenomenon, the world

<sup>74</sup> See *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 707.

<sup>75</sup> See Parmenides, fragments of a poem, "On Nature," in C. M. Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 11-20.

<sup>76</sup> Plotinus, "Enneads," in Bakewell, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-14.

as it appears to the senses, and the world of *noumenon*, the thing-in-itself, as it really is apart from appearances, he tends toward illusionism. This tendency is seen even more clearly in the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Life is to a great extent a dream. The only Reality is not the Brahman of Shankara or the One of Parmenides and Plotinus but the blind will.<sup>77</sup>

Illusionism finds its best modern Western expression, however, in terms of two truly great philosophers who stand in the tradition of Parmenides. The first is the saintly Dutch Jew, Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677). “The world is handled in the Spinozistic system,” says Thilly, “like a problem in geometry.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover, since the truths of mathematics are eternal and changeless, even time for Spinoza is merely a mode of thought. Again, like Parmenides, he is a pantheist and holds that all things, in spite of their appearance, are really parts of the One unchangeable, eternal, timeless Being. Hence time becomes an illusion of the human mind with which man is obsessed in this unreal world of appearances. In Spinoza’s world, everything follows in strict mathematical fashion from the First Cause, the changeless, eternal Being, not in the form of time, but really under the form of eternity. To see truly then, everything must be seen, not under the form of time, but under the form of eternity.<sup>79</sup>

The second great modern illusionist is the absolute idealist, Francis Herbert Bradley. For Bradley, as for Spinoza, the phenomenal world is mere appearance. The same holds true of the whole time process. Time, like space, is unreal,

<sup>77</sup> Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, Book I, 2, in Rand, *op. cit.*, pp. 637–39.

<sup>78</sup> Frank Thilly, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1927), p. 294. Used by permission.

<sup>79</sup> See excerpts from Spinoza’s *Ethics*, in Rand, *op. cit.*, pp. 148–98; for his conception of time see pp. 188–91.

since it disappears in the higher and ultimate unity of the Absolute.<sup>80</sup> In short, for Bradley, as for Shankara, Plotinus, and Spinoza, the changeless, static One is the only Reality.

Many modern cults show signs of illusionism. The most prominent among these, in America at least, is Christian Science, which denies not only the reality of matter but even the reality of such common experiences as birth, sickness, and death, in so far as they may seem to occasion suffering.<sup>81</sup> Cults influenced by Hinduism, such as theosophy, also show similar tendencies.<sup>82</sup> In the writings of some of the poets there are also definite signs of illusionism.<sup>83</sup>

Thus far we have been dealing with the extreme form of illusionism, the most typical form. Some consideration must now be given to the milder variety. The milder form has none of the *maya* element. The world is not illusion. The chief characteristic of the milder type is that it contrasts time and its limitations with eternity so sharply that the effect is to dwarf history into comparative insignificance. There are passages in the Bible, such as the 90th Psalm and some of the sayings of Paul, in which this tendency is apparent.<sup>84</sup> It is also evident that extreme apocalypticism, through its emphasis on the sudden coming of the end, tends to minimize the time process so greatly that the result is something resembling illusionism. Eternity looms so large that time becomes almost unreal or at least relatively unimportant.

<sup>80</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 42-43, 205-22.

<sup>81</sup> M. B. Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, pp. 206-9.

<sup>82</sup> *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 783.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, the speech of Prospero to Miranda, in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, in W. A. Wright, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, p. 1319.

<sup>84</sup> Especially I Cor. 7:29-32.

Within the Church there have been movements, such as the monastic movement, which have placed so great an emphasis on a future life that this present life, within time, came to be regarded as of little consequence. The net result of such tendencies is a mild form of illusionism. Some churches, likewise, such as the Eastern Orthodox, through their theology and even more through the sheer beauty of their ritual and forms of worship, tend to emphasize the eternal, the changeless so much, as over against the temporal and the changing, that the effect is something like illusionism.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, among philosophers and theologians there have been those who have magnified the transcendence of God to such a degree as to reduce man and the temporal process into apparent insignificance. Aristotle is the father of this type of thought with his conception of God as the Eternal Thinker, sitting apart from His needy creatures, in splendid isolation, lost in contemplation. Sometimes St. Augustine shows a healthy appreciation of time,<sup>86</sup> but at other times, due to Aristotelian and Pauline influences, he represents God as so altogether transcendent that time seems to fade into shadows of unreality. His apocalypticism, with its emphasis on the Judgment Day and the end of the world, has a similar effect.<sup>87</sup>

From St. Augustine this influence came down through the medieval thinkers to Calvin and Luther and to the churches which sprang from their efforts. Nevertheless, it must be said that in spite of their theology, with its extreme emphasis upon a transcendent God, the Calvinists, so far as

<sup>85</sup> For an excellent discussion of the Orthodox Church, see W. A. Brown, *The Church: Catholic and Protestant*, pp. 185-92.

<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *op. cit.*, Book XI, chap. xv, pp. 245-46.

<sup>87</sup> For God's timelessness, *ibid.*, Book X, chap. xxi, pp. 200-201; and for apocalypticism, Book XVI, chaps. i-iii, pp. 174-79.

actual life situations are concerned, have always shown a far greater appreciation of the significance of the time process than have the Lutherans. In our own day, however, the Barthians, the spiritual children of John Calvin, along with certain Eastern Orthodox theologians, have been the most emphatic in stressing the eternal as over against the temporal.

Among Orthodox thinkers Nicolas Berdyaev is undoubtedly the most important. In many respects he shows a real concern for this present world. Unlike many of his fellows he is really interested in social reform.<sup>88</sup> Yet on the other hand, in keeping with the Orthodox tradition, as one studies his system, one cannot help being impressed with his exaggerated emphasis on the eternal world for which this present world is little more than a preparation. He tends to minimize the importance of time in contrast with eternity, and he looks upon this present life almost altogether as just "a path to another world."<sup>89</sup>

### POSITIVISTIC TYPES

The fifth point of view, the positivistic, we found it necessary to consider, in part, in Chapter 1. In view of the previous discussion, suffice it to say by way of definition that this school holds that while it is possible and fruitful to study history scientifically as a phenomenal process, a metaphysics of history is as impossible as a metaphysics of nature. It is simply a waste of time to search for ultimate causes.

Positivism is closely related to modern science, and as a

<sup>88</sup> For his interest in social reform, see *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*.

<sup>89</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, trans. George Reavey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 197. Used by permission.



matter of fact its origins reach back to the beginnings of the modern scientific movement. It can be traced to the great movement which began with Roger Bacon, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, and other early scientific thinkers. These men were not positivists, but in laying the foundations of the new science they prepared the way for positivism. So far as the philosophy of history is concerned, it found a kind of forerunner, a kind of John the Baptist, in the amazingly modern thinker, Giambattista Vico who has been mentioned before in connection with cycles. Though by no means a positivist in the modern sense, yet he clearly displays certain tendencies which also served to prepare the way. Among these are his endeavors to make a critical study of society as a whole in order to discover its basic laws, his belief that all the sciences are interrelated, and finally his conception of the three stages: the age of the gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men.<sup>90</sup>

The father of modern positivism, however, was the Frenchman, Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Like Vico, Comte believed that the scientific method must be applied to society in order to discover its basic laws, that all the sciences must be brought together into a synthetic unity, and finally that there are three stages. These three stages are: first, the theological, when man seeks final causes and calls them gods or God; second, the metaphysical, when man substitutes abstract principles for deities; and third, the positivistic, when man casts aside metaphysics altogether and specializes in scientific knowledge.<sup>91</sup> Thus, unlike Vico, Comte held it impossible to discover final causes. He throws metaphysics out of the window.

<sup>90</sup> *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Vol. XXVIII, p. 65; also Ellwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-47.

<sup>91</sup> A. Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 2.



Comte has had a tremendous influence. From his native France his views spread across the English Channel and greatly affected such thinkers as John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. Spencer shared Comte's agnosticism relative to a First Cause,<sup>92</sup> but because of the evolutionary nature of his philosophy and his supreme emphasis on the idea of progress, we shall discuss his influential system more fully later. Indeed, Comte himself shared this idea of progress and did much to popularize it, and consequently we shall also have to consider him again. It is not always easy to classify great creative thinkers, since they usually present many different tendencies. Yet, as a thinker, Comte stands out primarily as the prophet of positivism, and therefore he belongs predominately to this type.

Comte's views also spread across the Atlantic to North and South America. In fact, in South America, especially in Brazil, positivism became something of a religion for a substantial number of the intelligentsia. In the United States it influenced the humanists, and the pragmatists and instrumentalists. Among the latter, John Dewey is the most prominent, and before bringing this discussion of positivism to a close, we must consider his point of view briefly.

Dewey, like Comte, believes in the scientific method and in its application to society, and also, like Comte, he holds that metaphysics is impossible and hence a waste of time. The business of philosophy is not to seek for God or ultimate causes, but rather the practical business of using the means which science has put at our disposal to satisfy human wants.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, in his *Philosophy and Civilization*, he insists that philosophy is not a means to discover

<sup>92</sup> H. Spencer, *First Principles*, pp. 92-97.

<sup>93</sup> J. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, pp. 44-45.

abiding truths, but rather it is a means to help us to understand the problems and aspirations of mankind.<sup>94</sup>

For Dewey, then, as for Comte, philosophy is little more than a form of science. He would clip its wings so as to make it incapable of flights into the unknown. As a good positivist he is interested in the how of things and not in the why of things. Dewey has had a vast, immeasurable influence not only in the United States but also in the South American republics, and even in China and India. In America he has, to a great extent, molded the thinking of the teachers in both the colleges and public schools. He has also had a decided influence on historians. The philosophy of history of many, perhaps most, historians in the United States today, in so far as they have one, seems to be some form of positivism.<sup>95</sup>

### EVOLUTIONARY TYPES

The sixth and last, and in many respects the most comprehensive point of view, is the evolutionary. Like the fatalistic, it involves an orderly series of processes in history, but it does not involve cycles, that is, the continual repetition of the same series of processes without any sign of progress being made. It leaves a place for what Whitehead calls "creative advance into novelty."<sup>96</sup> Unlike the illusionistic, it takes time seriously, though at least one of its major forms also tries to do full justice to the eternal and the timeless. Again, while some of the adherents of the evolutionary view incline toward positivism, far more, unlike positivism, fully recognize the place and possibility of metaphysics.

<sup>94</sup> J. Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization*, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> See W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>96</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 196. Used by permission.

The evolutionary view is perhaps most closely related to the apocalyptic, for it tends to look upon history as a drama moving toward a goal; but unlike apocalypticism it is evolutionary, not revolutionary. While leaving room for the rather sudden emergence of new qualities, it does not look, as theistic apocalypticism does, for a Messiah coming suddenly in the clouds, nor, like Marxian communism, for a new order born out of the birth throes of chaos and violence. As over against these it envisages a more or less gradual advance toward a faraway goal, though modern evolutionists also recognize the fact that new qualities often emerge suddenly and by means of crises. Moreover, as over against superhuman agents and processes, most evolutionists tend to emphasize the place and responsibility of the individual human agents far more than all forms of apocalypticism. For it will be recalled that whereas the religious apocalypst places responsibility on God and his Messiah, the Marxian has a similar confidence in the materialistic forces of history, functioning, however, through a messianic class, the proletariat.

Like the apocalyptic, the evolutionary is sharply divided into two major types which may be designated as the naturalistic and humanistic, and the teleological or theistic. We shall begin with the naturalistic and humanistic. Naturalism as a philosophy goes back to three ancient Greek thinkers: Democritus (c. 460-370 B.C.), the Greek atomist; Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), the Greek hedonist; and Lucretius (94-54 B.C.), the Roman poet. None of these three thinkers were really interested in history. The only reason that they are important for our purpose is that naturalism can best be understood by tracing it to its origins. It owes its metaphysics to Democritus, the theory that matter or nature is the fundamental reality; it owes its ethics to Epi-

curus; and its doctrine of creation through the chance combinations of basic structural units to Lucretius. Moreover, it is interesting to note that, in a sense, the doctrine of progress, of which more will be said later, can be traced back to the Epicureans and perhaps to Lucretius. It is also interesting to note that the former did not look to the past for the Golden Age. In fact, they held that civilization was a gradual growth from a primitive animal-like state. Lucretius even used the word "progress," but it seems doubtful whether he used it in anything like the modern sense of indefinite advance. For in spite of these glimmerings, they often doubted the ultimate value of what progress seemed to have taken place, and in the final analysis were fatalists like most of the Greeks.<sup>97</sup>

In order to understand modern naturalism, especially as it relates itself to the philosophy of history, we must next consider the idea of progress with which it has been very closely associated. The idea of progress is closely related to science, since science first gave man the idea that he could master his environment and thus achieve a higher and higher state of existence. The dominant theories of the ancient world were the cycle theory with its weary repetitions, and the apocalyptic with its hope based upon the Divine Intervention. It is obvious, then, that there was no chance for the idea of progress to become dominant before the Renaissance and the advent of modern science. Roger Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Francis Bacon, and the rest paved the way. Bury points out that while in Plato's *Republic* the rulers are philosophers, in Bacon's *New Atlantis* one finds a college of scientists.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 612.

<sup>98</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, p. 60.

Bury, in his classic work on the subject, *The Idea of Progress*, also points out that not only the strict scientists but likewise Descartes, the philosopher, especially in his mechanical theory of nature, enhanced the doctrine of progress.<sup>99</sup> Vico, as we have seen, influenced both the modern development of the cycle theory and the positivistic view of history. He also contributed to the development of the idea of progress. Though he believed in cycles, yet he conceived these cycles as a spiral, each repetition of the three stages reaching a higher level than the preceding one.<sup>100</sup> It is in France, however, the home of Descartes, that the idea of progress in the modern sense originated and developed. It reached its zenith just before the French Revolution when men's hopes were at flood tide. In fact, Charles Perrault, the Frenchman, wrote in 1687:

I own that I consider myself fortunate to know the happiness we enjoy; it is a great pleasure to survey all the past ages in which I can see the birth and the progress of all things, but nothing which has not received a new increase and lustre in our own times. Our age has, in some sort, arrived at the summit of perfection. And since for some years the rate of progress is much slower and appears almost insensible—as the days seem to cease lengthening when the solstice is near—it is pleasant to think that probably there are not many things for which we need envy future generations.<sup>101</sup>

Soon this dream of utopia crossed the English Channel, and English poets vied with philosophers and even with theologians in painting glorious pictures of the Golden Age which was dawning.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-77.

<sup>100</sup> See Ellwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-46; and *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 66.

<sup>101</sup> As quoted by J. B. Bury in *The Idea of Progress* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), p. 87. Used by permission.



This kind of optimism received a rude shock when the French Revolution broke in all its fury. Conservatives and liberals alike were simply dazed by this brutal exhibition of human nature in the raw, but the idea of progress revived during the nineteenth century. First of all, there was Comte, the father of positivism, who did much to popularize the idea. As we have seen, he held that mankind advances through three stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. This last stage he considered as the very highest. Comte believed that the positivist stage had arrived, that despotism, militarism, and war, which he linked with the theological spirit, were doomed and would give way to an era of scientific investigation, freedom, peace, morality, and humanitarianism.<sup>102</sup>

The idea of progress received its greatest impetus, however, from the theory of evolution, an idea which had been advanced earlier, but which Charles Darwin stated in classic form in his epoch-making *Origin of Species*, first published in 1859. In the mind of Herbert Spencer, progress based upon evolution became a gospel. He saw one great law—the law of evolution, universal progress pervading the entire universe from star to man, forcing all things upward from a primitive homogeneous state to a higher and higher heterogeneous state. Moreover, man is so plastic that he can advance indefinitely. Evils are the result of nonadaptation and can be eliminated. The Golden Age is not only possible but inevitable.<sup>103</sup>

Spencer had a tremendous influence. The doctrine of inevitable progress spread to America where it affected the humanists, on the one hand, and the social gospel move-

<sup>102</sup> Comte, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 457-67; see also Bury, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-301.

<sup>103</sup> See Bury, *op. cit.*, pp. 337-41; and H. Spencer, *Illustrations of Universal Progress*, pp. 1-60.



ment of certain theists on the other. However, in fairness to Spencer, it must be said that as he grew older he became far less extravagant in his thinking. He finally came to admit that scientific progress could never reach perfection, and that there is an ultimate doom in store for the earth and for man and all his works.<sup>104</sup>

There was a time when naturalistic humanists, following the lead of Comte and Spencer, accepted the idea of inevitable progress and looked upon science as a virtual Moses to lead mankind into the promised land. Today, however, they are far more realistic and sober in their thinking. Two world wars and the possibility of a third, an atomic war, have given them cause to wonder whether science may not in the end prove to be a Judas or even a Frankenstein. The idea of inevitable progress has been given up, but most of them still cling to their belief in democracy and in the possibilities of man.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, naturalists have a hard time keeping up their courage during these days of world chaos and crisis.

In fairness to naturalism it must also be said that modern naturalists are no longer materialists in the old sense of believing with Democritus that hard atoms are the ultimate units from whose chance combinations all things spring. The modern energy theory of matter has destroyed the older materialism forever. Modern naturalists are trying to make the concept of nature broad enough and rich enough to include the higher qualities of mind which manifest themselves upon the stage of history.<sup>106</sup> Contemporary naturalism is closely related to positivism. Both systems tend to restrict truth to what can be scientifically demon-

<sup>104</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, pp. 471, 508.

<sup>105</sup> S. Hook, "Naturalism and Democracy," in Y. H. Krikorian (ed.), *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, pp. 40-64.

<sup>106</sup> See especially R. W. Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism*.

strated and to regard nature as the whole of reality.<sup>107</sup> The only real difference seems to be that while naturalism is bold enough to develop a metaphysics, positivism still tries to ignore the relevance of the problem.

Many positivists, however, are naturalists at heart. Dewey, for example, shows both positivistic and naturalistic tendencies. On the one hand, as we have seen, as a good positivist Dewey denies the possibilities of metaphysics, but on the other hand, a close reading of Dewey shows that some kind of metaphysics is implicit in his system. It seems to be a form of naturalism with some mixture of idealism and perhaps also of neo-realism.<sup>108</sup> Only in such systems as that of Roy Wood Sellars does one find naturalism bold enough to affirm a complete metaphysics based upon the system of nature as the one ultimate reality from which all things come.<sup>109</sup>

What, then, are the distinguishing characteristics of modern naturalistic humanism as a philosophy of history? There are three. First, along with the positivist, there is the tendency to restrict truth to what can be scientifically demonstrated. As a result, the naturalist emphasizes the things which can be sensed; he tends to regard material forces and processes as the determining factors in history. Thus a fundamental relationship exists between naturalism and Marxian communism as philosophies. Philosophically, communism is really a form of naturalism; but all naturalists are by no means Communists; and as a philosophy of history, as we have seen, communism has so much in com-

<sup>107</sup> See W. R. Dennis, "The Categories of Naturalism," in Krikorian (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 288-91.

<sup>108</sup> This conclusion is especially based upon an analysis of his *Quest for Certainty*.

<sup>109</sup> See especially Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism* and *The Philosophy of Physical Realism*.

mon with apocalypticism that it fell into that category. It is a naturalistic form of apocalypticism. All forms of naturalism, by virtue of their emphasis on science, are more analytic than synoptic. Some naturalists, such as Sellars, have tried to overcome this defect, but their success has been rather meager.

Second, and most important of all, all naturalists, over against teleologists, reject the belief in a superhuman plan or purpose in history; they do not believe in the existence of God, at least not in the theistic sense of conscious Mind. Hence, in the final analysis, they must resort to chance and accident as ultimate principles of explanation. Nordau's philosophy of history is really a form of naturalism, but we classified it as fatalistic because he conceives the universe in terms of a series of cycles without any particular rhyme or reason. It would not be fair to call all forms of naturalism fatalistic, for many of them are evolutionary; that is, many naturalists believe that there has been real progress in the past. History has not been merely a weary round of cycles. New creative levels have been reached, and with the application of human intelligence to our problems, the possibilities of tomorrow are even greater.<sup>110</sup>

In the third place, most modern naturalisms are humanistic. The attention is focused upon man and his values. This tendency can be traced to four chief sources, namely, the common Hebrew-Christian tradition with its emphasis on the value of personality, the Renaissance with its rediscovery of individualism, the rise of modern democracy, and

<sup>110</sup> This paragraph does not contradict what was said on page 39, in footnote 68, about the ultimate fatalism which is inherent in all thoroughgoing naturalistic systems. Naturalists may be fatalistic so far as the ultimate issue is concerned, in the sense of being unable to escape the inexorable doom which will overtake the earth and all life, yet in view of the long future which lies before man, they may see real creative possibilities within history as long as it lasts.

finally Comte's religion of humanity. Naturalism, then, has undoubtedly made two great contributions to the philosophy of history: first, in its insistence upon the empirical attitude and method, and second, in its humanism, its emphasis upon man and his values and ideals.

This leads us to the second type: the teleological or theistic. The teleological differs from the naturalistic primarily in that, as the name indicates, teleologists see a superhuman purpose in history. History is not fundamentally chaotic and irrational; it is not merely a vast stage upon which blind cosmic forces play. History is basically rational, purposive, controlled, in the large at least, by a Supreme Mind which is aiming at a faraway goal. There have been times when teleologists have been so greatly influenced by the naturalistic-humanistic conception of an earthly utopia that they have tended to conceive the goal in hedonistic terms, but never entirely so. Usually the goal is conceived in Hegelian fashion, in terms of the greater and greater development of man's total higher life, his mental, esthetic, moral, and spiritual capacities. Since man cannot develop these capacities except in a society which can provide the necessary conditions, teleologists have become increasingly more concerned with social problems. They dream of the Kingdom of God upon earth, and some of them burn out their lives to realize this dream. Yet today, like the naturalists, sobered by two world wars and the danger of a third, they no longer indulge in extravagant hopes of an ideal society. The Kingdom of God, they now hold, cannot be perfectly, completely, and finally realized in this present world; it can only be approximated. The Kingdom of God finds its final and ultimate fulfilment, not within history but beyond history.

The evolutionary teleological view has much in common with both the prophetic and the apocalyptic. All three are

basically teleological. They hold that there is a God who is trying to realize His Purpose in history. They look upon history, not as a weary round of cycles, but as a drama moving on to a climax or goal. In the end, righteousness will triumph and evil will be defeated. God will not finally be frustrated; His Kingdom will come.

Both the prophet and the apocalypst expect the Kingdom to come rather suddenly. The apocalypst, as we have seen, sees the Kingdom coming as the grand climax to a series of Divine Acts. The evolutionist does not expect the Kingdom to come in this spectacular manner. It will only come as the result of man's willingness to cooperate with the Divine Will. As a matter of fact, it is always coming, as man through his cooperation with God advances in the direction of the Divine ideal. Every good deed done, every wise act of statesmanship, every increase in spiritual insight and vitality, and every movement in the direction of world unity, order, justice, and peace constitutes a step, whether great or small, toward the ideal of the Kingdom. Beginning in time, this process continues into eternity.

As over against both the apocalyptic and the prophetic views, the modern evolutionary teleologist holds that for the most part the Kingdom will come more slowly and gradually, little by little, as the result of a long and never-ending process of development. He would agree with the prophet and the apocalypst that there will come crises, and that, as the result of crises, development or decadence may be greatly accelerated. For as a consequence of the doctrine of emergent evolution and of the modern dynamic view of history, he expects novelties, the sudden appearance of new levels with new qualities and possibilities; and in so far as these tend to increase values, he sees in them a revelation of the Divine. Yet, unlike the prophet, he does not



look for the "Day of Yahweh"; nor, like the apocalypst, for the sudden coming of Christ in the skies. The evolutionist sees the Divine Agent expressing and advancing His purposes through natural, social, moral, and spiritual processes.

Like the prophet, however, and even more than the prophet, he holds that God makes use of human instrumentality. The modern teleologist frankly concedes that God Himself cannot do some things in history if the appropriate human instrument is lacking. At the same time, over against the naturalist, he sees superhuman processes in history as a whole, and he envisages the realization of a superhuman Plan and Purpose. For him, even the creation of appropriate instruments is a Divine Act. Human personality, through which God acts, could not possibly come by chance, and men do not create themselves.

The roots of the teleological conception go far back to the very beginnings of man's speculations concerning the meaning of history. It has its roots in the primitive view that the gods are real agents who take an interest and an active part in human affairs. On the henotheistic level, this means each god acting as the champion of his own tribe or nation. There are signs of the teleological view in ancient Egypt, and especially of the idea that the Divine functions through human agents; for it is in Egypt that social prophets first arose. Moreover, it is to Egypt that we must look for the genesis of the messianic ideal, not in terms of a Divine Son of Man coming in the clouds, but in terms of an ideal human king.<sup>111</sup>

It is to the Hebrews, however, that we must look for the greatest development of the teleological view of history in the ancient world. This remarkable development, begin-

<sup>111</sup> See Breasted, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 182-206.



ning with J about 850 B.C. and finding its culmination in the insights of the Hebrew Prophets, has already been traced. Suffice it to say that the Hebrews have taken a greater interest in history than has any other race. As a group, they were never illusionists or fatalists, nor were their greatest thinkers.<sup>112</sup> The Hebrew sages, prophets, and poets, while always giving careful recognition to the Divine factor in history, also have a healthy regard for the place of human instrumentality as an agent of the Divine Purpose. Thus God made use of Abraham and Moses as instruments; the Prophets considered themselves as mouthpieces for God, and more than that, they often conceived the Messianic Age as coming through the influence of a second David.<sup>113</sup>

In fact, the Hebrews did not become apocalypsts in any thoroughgoing manner till two influences played upon them sufficiently to bring about this kind of reaction. The first was national defeat and disaster. Any nation which suffers defeat after defeat without any visible hope will look for supernatural help, and the result is usually some form of apocalypticism. The second influence was Persian Zoroastrianism with its fully developed eschatology.<sup>114</sup> Here the Hebrew mind found something which it could use, and the result is the full development of the apocalyptic view of history. Nor must this view be despised. It contains too much pure gold, even though as a philosophy of history it is no longer tenable. Ancient ruins hide many precious things. We have already seen how the apocalyptic view is, in certain fundamental respects, closely related to the modern

<sup>112</sup> There are traces of fatalism, however, in at least one book of the Hebrew Scriptures: the Book of Ecclesiastes.

<sup>113</sup> See the first part of this chapter for a more detailed account of the development of the Hebrew philosophy of history.

<sup>114</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev makes the interesting observation that of all the people of the ancient world, only the Hebrews and the Persians had any real awareness of history and of historical destiny. See *op. cit.*, p. 32.

teleological view. It is likewise obvious that in the ancient Hebrew world, during certain periods at any rate, lacking the modern concept of evolution, apocalypticism, in the face of the miseries and atrocities of history, was the only form which the teleological view could take and make sense.

We have already seen that Jesus, in view of the large apocalyptic sections in the Gospels, must have been in some sense an apocalypst, but certainly not as thoroughgoing as his reporters. Nor did he think that the Kingdom would come as the result of a gradual process of evolution. The ancient world did not think in these terms. Nevertheless, in the parables of the Kingdom, in which he stresses growth, we find something in common with the modern teleological view of history. In order to meet a special emergency in His creation, God, eventually, may have to resort to special revolutionary means, but He normally works through the natural processes of growth.<sup>115</sup> The view of Paul and of the early Church was undoubtedly more apocalyptic than that of the Master. This same view, as we have seen, also found expression in St. Augustine's *City of God*, and it really has been the predominant Christian view of history until modern science, together with modern philosophy and the critical study of the Bible, undermined it.

The teleological view of history, then, though having its roots in the past, is in its modern form a comparatively recent idea. Like so many other present tendencies in the philosophy of history, it can be traced back to Vico. It will be recalled that Vico believed in cycles, but not in the fatalistic sense; for him, cycles are spiral, each succeeding repetition being on a higher level. Unlike the naturalist, it is also

<sup>115</sup> For growth parables, see especially Mark 4:1-34 and Matt. 13:1-33.

certain that he believed in Providence; but he was not an apocalypst. God does not guide the nations by miraculous interventions. He guides the processes of history, as He does nature, through a rational system of laws.<sup>116</sup> Here, in this remarkable thinker, we seem to find the real genesis of the modern teleological view of history.

The modern teleological view of history was also greatly influenced by the critical study of the Bible, by the doctrine of inevitable progress, and by the theory of evolution. The first not only undermined the old traditional apocalyptic view, but it also contributed to a recovery of the social message of Jesus and the Prophets and thus led to the social gospel movement. Inspired by the doctrine of progress and the theory of evolution, some of the earlier leaders of the social gospel movement at times raised their hopes too high. Thus, the noble Rauschenbusch goes so far as to say:

Now the millennial is the social hope of Christianity. . . . To mankind it offers a perfect social life, victory over all evil that wounds and mars human intercourse and satisfaction for the hunger and thirst after justice, equality, and love.<sup>117</sup>

No teleologist today expects this much, at least not at any time soon. In fact, there is real danger that modern Christian thinkers lose their nerve by giving way to the extreme Calvinistic-Barthian emphasis on the transcendence of God, the depravity of man, and the general hopelessness of the human situation. Nevertheless, the social gospel has come to stay as an enduring insight, and as a representative of this movement at its best F. Ernest Johnson has put the matter thus:

<sup>116</sup> *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 65.

<sup>117</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1907), pp. 106-7. Used by permission.

To be aware of the abyss does not require that one despair of attaining the heights. . . . Not arrival at a goal, but validated progress in the direction of it, gives life its zest and faith its warrant. . . . It is my strong belief that to conceive the Kingdom of God as a *project within the historical process*, which is motivated by reference to a goal never reached but always envisaged, is the most effective way to implement the Christian ethical imperative in our day.<sup>118</sup>

Many modern thinkers have contributed to the teleological view of history. Among them are such names as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), J. C. F. Schiller (1759-1805), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831), Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775-1854), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), and many living thinkers, among whom Arnold J. Toynbee stands out as the greatest philosopher of history of our times. Since it is beyond our purpose to write a history of the philosophy of history, but merely to make a general survey of the field in order to gain perspective, we shall confine our attention to four of these thinkers.

The first of these is Immanuel Kant. Now Kant, as we have already seen, in making the distinction between phenomena and noumena, tended to belittle the time process and thus in a rather subtle way encouraged a certain form of illusionism. However, in his interesting little book, *Eternal Peace*, he makes a real contribution to the teleological view of history. He is definitely a meliorist, not a fatalist. Man, through his divinely endowed capacities, including the capacity for political organization, can to a great extent determine his own destiny, including the outlawry of war. Moreover, the universe itself is a teleological system, and

<sup>118</sup> F. Ernest Johnson, *The Social Gospel Re-examined* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1940), pp. 71, 93, 109. Used by permission.

"the history of the human race, viewed as a whole, may be regarded as the realization of a hidden plan."<sup>119</sup> By this hidden plan, Kant means that in our world man is forced to exercise and develop his capacities or perish. He believes that because of this fact even the very antagonisms between nations will finally force men to organize the world in a rational way for peace.

The greatest philosopher of history is still Hegel, and since he has so profoundly influenced the modern teleological view of history, we must consider his view at some length. First of all, Hegel held that "truth is the whole."<sup>120</sup> In other words, history, as well as reality as a whole, cannot be understood in terms of analysis alone. It can be understood only when viewed as a whole. Things are meaningless when viewed in isolation. They acquire meaning only as seen in relation to other things, and ultimately in relation to the total process. This is an important concept of Hegel for which we will find use later.

In the second place, Hegel was not so much a follower of Parmenides as of Heraclitus. History is not static but a dynamic process moving toward higher and higher levels, scientifically, culturally, politically, morally, religiously, and philosophically.<sup>121</sup> In this process Hegel sees God Himself, the Universal Mind, laboring and struggling in order that the process may proceed onward and upward.<sup>122</sup> In the third place, history is for Hegel a dialectical process. By this he means that history has gone through three main gradations.

<sup>119</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Eternal Peace*, trans. W. Hastie (Boston: The World Peace Foundation, 1914), p. 19. Used by permission.

<sup>120</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910), Vol. I, p. 17. Used by permission.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 430-32.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 27-28.



tions in its advancement toward freedom. During the first stage the human mind is still so much in bondage to nature that it is not even conscious of freedom, but during the second it acquires a degree of emancipation, and during the third it finally achieves real self-conscious freedom.<sup>123</sup> He also divides history into four general stages: first, the Oriental, "the childhood of History," when one is free; second, the Greek or adolescent, when the many enjoy a kind of "boisterous and turbulent" freedom; third, the Roman, the age of manhood, where the individual is sacrificed to the interests of the state; and fourth, the age of spiritual maturity realized most fully in the Germanic world, which includes all of western Europe and also America.<sup>124</sup>

In the fourth place, history is a teleological process. It is not the result of chance or determined by economic forces. For Hegel, history is truly the work of God, and the embodiment of His purpose. "What has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not 'without God,' but is essentially His Work."<sup>125</sup> Finally, in the fifth place, history as a teleological process is headed toward a goal, and that goal is freedom, a condition where humanity is free to develop and use its highest capacities without hindrance. Hegel never tires of two things, namely, that "Reason is the Sovereign of the World,"<sup>126</sup> and that freedom is "the absolute goal of History."<sup>127</sup>

Hegel has often been accused of making the Prussian state the final embodiment of the goal of history;<sup>128</sup> but in the light of the facts, this criticism seems unfair. What he

<sup>123</sup> Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 56.

<sup>124</sup> All phrases quoted in this sentence are from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: The Willey Book Co., 1900), pp. 105, 106. This and all other quotations used by permission.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>128</sup> For example, S. Eddy, *God in History*, p. 112.

did say was that the goal of history found concrete expression through the German world composed of all the Germanic nations, and in so far as they embodied the spirit of the Protestant Reformation. While Hegel saw in the Catholic Church the embodiment of the principle of oppressive authoritarianism,<sup>129</sup> in Protestantism, on the other hand, he saw the embodiment of the principle of liberty. "This is the essence of the Reformation: Man is in his very nature destined to be free."<sup>130</sup> Moreover, as has been pointed out before, by "the German world" he means the whole family of Germanic nations, even including England, Scandinavia, France, and America.

Hegel has two chief weaknesses. First, there are times when he is a bit vague in his use of words, as for example when he leaves us wondering at times whether he is a theist or a pantheist. Second, his failure to see that his view that the state is above the moral law and that war is inevitable really constitutes a contradiction of his chief contention that history is a rational process and a teleological process whose goal is freedom. Given the absolute state and war as an inevitable necessity, freedom becomes impossible.

Brief mention must also be made of the great French philosopher, Henri Bergson. He himself testifies that he began his career as a mechanist, and he attributes this to the influence of Herbert Spencer. But it was his realization that thoroughgoing mechanism really did violence to the fundamental experience of time and change and development which caused Bergson to change his views. The fundamental principle of his whole system is the concept of evolution which involves time and change. No modern philosopher has stressed the importance of history as a process involving change and development more than he.

<sup>129</sup> Hegel, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-13.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

Moreover, his system is profoundly teleological. In his *Creative Evolution*, he conceives the creative principle as a kind of life force, the vital impetus.<sup>131</sup> In his later book *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, however, the vital impetus becomes God; but God is no transcendent Being viewing the struggle afar off. He is in the very midst of it, laboring, struggling, striving, and by means of his tremendous efforts eventually succeeds in lifting His creation to higher levels. We shall have cause to consider Bergson again in dealing with the clues.

If Hegel is the greatest philosopher of history of all time, Arnold J. Toynbee is certainly the greatest of our time. In fact, he has been classed, and rightly so, with St. Augustine, Bossuet, Marx, and Spengler.<sup>132</sup> Within the limits of a book such as this it is impossible to do justice to thinkers of the caliber of Hegel and Toynbee. The most that can be done is to indicate the chief characteristics of their thought. Therefore we shall endeavor to treat Toynbee as we treated Hegel.

First of all, unlike Spengler, Toynbee is truly universal and international in outlook. He believes that our political salvation lies largely in the establishment of an adequate world organization which transcends all national sovereignties.<sup>133</sup> Second, in trying to understand history, he insists that we cannot think in terms of nations, but that the smallest possible units are civilizations. During the last six thousand years, twenty-six have arisen, of which sixteen have perished, and of the ten which are still alive today, only one, our Western, still shows any real signs of health.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> H. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 50-55, 254-55.

<sup>132</sup> C. C. Gillispie, "At the Bar of History," *Christian Century*, July 7, 1948, p. 684.

<sup>133</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>134</sup> Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IV, pp. 1-2.

However, he does think that some of the others, such as the Eastern Orthodox, the Moslem, the Chinese, and the Hindu, may exert considerable influence in the future.<sup>135</sup>

The third characteristic of Toynbee's thought is his insistence that all civilizations are really contemporary.<sup>136</sup> By this he means that in comparison with the age of the universe or even of our earth, they are near enough to each other to be regarded as contemporaneous; for all civilizations which have arisen, have developed within the last six thousand years, a relatively brief span of time.

Toynbee, as has been pointed out before, has been influenced considerably by Spengler's *Decline of the West*. It was this book which presented him with his basic problem. He discovered that while Spengler dogmatically asserted that all civilizations are subject to the cycle and the same sad fate in the end, still he gave no reason or cause for this phenomenon. Toynbee's problem was to find a cause, and this, he tells us, was suggested to him by Goethe's *Faust*. As in *Faust* the Devil appears to challenge God and thus stimulates God to carry on the work of creation, so likewise every civilization, culture, race, nation, and tribe needs a devil in terms of a challenge, a problem to solve, in order to goad it on toward activity and creativity. This leads to Toynbee's fourth principle, his famous principle of Challenge and Response as the basic cause of the rise and fall of civilizations. Those civilizations which meet the challenge survive and succeed, but those that fail perish.<sup>137</sup>

Fifth, though stimulated by Spengler, Toynbee rejects Spengler's fatalism and holds to a teleological interpretation of history. There is truth in Spengler. In certain general ways, history has repeated itself in terms of the birth,

<sup>135</sup> Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 220-21.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

growth, decline, and fall of civilizations; but the fact that other civilizations have fallen, or exist in a state of decay as some do, is no sign that our Western civilization will follow their example. We are free within limits, and can be saved if we will but use the right means and apply them soon.<sup>138</sup>

No modern historian or philosopher of history gives a larger place to the creative role of religion in history than Toynbee. Religion is not, on the one hand, the enemy and destroyer of civilization, nor on the other hand, merely civilization's handmaid. Rather, he sees the great religions as coming to birth during the death throes of a civilization which has committed suicide. Out of such a time of destruction and suffering, God is able to lead men to new heights of spiritual discernment; and through the new religion which has come to life, mankind may take heart again to venture the hazardous task of building a new and better society.<sup>139</sup> This leads to Toynbee's sixth insight: the goal of history is revealed through the great religions, especially through Christianity.

In the visions seen by the Prophets of Israel, Judah, and Iran, history is not a cyclic and not a mechanical process. It is the masterful and progressive execution, on the narrow stage of this world, of a divine plan which is revealed to us in this fragmentary glimpse, but which transcends our human powers of vision and understanding in every dimension.<sup>140</sup>

For Toynbee this goal is conceived primarily in terms of the development of the spiritual capacities of the human soul. Here we see a similarity to Hegel's idea that the goal of history is freedom, that is, freedom in the sense of a condition where man is free to develop and exercise his

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>139</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-48.

<sup>140</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 14-15. Used by permission.



higher capacities without hindrance. Toynbee rejects both the completely secular view of naturalistic humanism, and also the completely other-worldly view of apocalypticism and certain forms of illusionism.<sup>141</sup> He believes that the goal of history lies partly within this present world, but even more in the larger eternal world beyond. Souls pass through this world on their way to a larger and greater destiny.<sup>142</sup> Utopia or the Kingdom of God can never be absolutely realized upon this earth, but this is no cause for pessimism. For man's life and human society can attain higher and higher levels, if man but wills. Nor is this present world a barren, Godforsaken desert. It is God's world, at least a province of His vast Kingdom.<sup>143</sup>

With Toynbee, then, we bring this discussion of the types of the philosophy of history or points of view to a close. Moreover, it is altogether fitting that we close this phase of our discussion with his masterful synthesis. For he truly epitomizes the best in contemporary thinking on the subject, while he omits much of the worst and towers above his contemporaries mountainlike. Having gained perspective by this brief survey of the best insights of the ages, we are now ready to consider the clues.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254-60.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-48.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 260-63.



PART II  
THE FIVE EMPIRICAL CLUES



## Chapter 3

### THE FIRST CLUE: HISTORY SEEMS A MANIFESTATION OF THE ULTIMATE

The only direct, immediate, absolutely certain knowledge which anyone possesses is the subjective awareness of his present state of consciousness. Direct, immediate, absolutely certain knowledge can lead us no farther than solipsism, that treacherous bog which all philosophers seek to avoid. All other knowledge, including that of nature and of other selves, rests upon inferences drawn from present impressions. This is a much needed lesson which the positivist must learn. We are sure that nature, the physical world with its forces, laws, and concrete objects, is no illusion, but that it really exists, because this concept is the most rational interpretation of certain signs which are given to us in our subjective conscious experience. The same holds true of our knowledge of other persons. We never grasp their existence as directly and immediately as we do our own. They make signs to us in terms of language, bodily movements, and expressions. To refuse to accept these manifestations as signs or clues of the existence of other minds, as intelligent and rational as our own, is to embrace ourselves in the absurdities of behaviorism and solipsism.

Likewise, when we make the metaphysical venture, we have no absolutely certain knowledge. There is no direct seeing into the heart of things. Nevertheless, philosophers and prophets in all ages have been willing to make the ven-



ture, convinced that nature and personality, together with the structure and tendencies of history and the manifestation of basic human capacities and powers upon this earthly stage, really supply us signs or clues which, if followed and rightly interpreted, may lead us to a real, even though limited and partial, knowledge of the ultimate. In this book our chief interest centers in the seven clues which are derived from reflection upon the ultimate meaning of that long and interesting line of events which comprise the greatest of all dramas, the drama of history. The writer is not so ambitious as to believe that he will finally and absolutely resolve the enigma; but if he can help men to see some light amid this darkness, and if he can make some small contribution toward the construction of a more adequate and coherent philosophy of history, adequate for this age, so full of both danger and promise, he will not have failed entirely.

In Part II only the first five clues will be given consideration, leaving the two final clues until Part III. These first five clues are: (1) history seems a manifestation of the ultimate; (2) history demands consideration of man; (3) history demands consideration of irrational factors; (4) history demands consideration of signs of purpose; and (5) history demands perspective and synopsis. These are designated as empirical clues because they are drawn directly from the phenomenon of history itself as it impresses the human mind.

This present chapter will be devoted to the first clue, that history seems a manifestation of the ultimate. This clue has come to light as a direct result, not only of the way history impresses the writer, but also in the light of what the vast majority of the philosophers of history have believed and taught. Of the six general types, only the thinkers belong-

ing to the illusionistic and the positivistic would take issue with this idea. The other four may disagree as to the nature of the ultimate which history manifests, but they are agreed that some kind of an ultimate exists, and that in some sense history constitutes a manifestation of that ultimate. For the fatalist, it is Fate; for the Marxian Communist and the evolutionary naturalist, it is the system of nature, however interpreted; but for the prophet, the traditional apocalypticist, and the evolutionary teleologist, the ultimate reality which manifests itself in history is the Living God. In the discussion which is to follow we shall explore the meaning and significance of this idea, held by so many eminent thinkers, that history in some sense reveals a more basic and fundamental reality from which it springs. This may involve considerable criticism of the illusionistic and positivistic views. In fact, there may be certain implications of this investigation which may also cast doubts upon the validity of all naturalisms.

### THE STRANGE PARADOX OF HISTORY

History doubtless presents a strange paradox. In certain respects it seems insignificant. According to the best recent estimates, the stellar system began about ten billion years ago, the sun about five billion, and the earth perhaps two or three billion years ago.<sup>1</sup> Life probably appeared a billion or so years ago,<sup>2</sup> the first submen about 500,000 years ago, the first real men about 25,000 years ago, and modern man only 10,000 years ago.<sup>3</sup> In comparison with the age of the uni-

<sup>1</sup> See A. S. Eddington, *Stars and Atoms*, pp. 85-121; J. Jeans, *The Universe Around Us*, pp. 156-57, 208; and L. du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> R. S. Lull, *Organic Evolution*, pp. 670-91; and F. W. Blackmar, *History of Human Society*, p. 59.

verse, the sun, the earth, the appearance of life or of the first submen, we are only of yesterday, seemingly only a brief flash in the pan. Moreover, as Toynbee has pointed out, the twenty-six civilizations which have come into existence, all within the last six thousand years, are really contemporaneous.

On the time-scale now unfolded by geology and cosmogony, the five or six thousand years that had elapsed since the first emergence of representatives of the species of human society that we label "civilizations" were an infinitesimally brief span of time compared to the age, up to date, of the human race, of life on this planet, of the planet itself, of our own solar system, of the galaxy in which it is one grain of dust, or of the immensely vaster and older sum total of the stellar cosmos.<sup>4</sup>

In short, when one considers the few brief moments of civilized life upon the earth, history seems to shrink into utter insignificance, and consequently appears to be incapable of shedding any metaphysical light.

Again, the same thing seems to be evident when one considers the fact that history seems to be a process that is forever vanishing. It appears to be no more than a spark, bright for a moment, and then gone forever. It seems that only the brief, fleeting present is real, that the past is dead and gone. It cannot be recalled, except in terms of the vague images of memory. In fact, at times the past seems nothing more than a dream, as though it had never been. Even the great empires and the mighty kings and conquerors of ages past, before whose glance millions once trembled, seem to us of today little more than the figures which we see on the cinema screen. Sometimes the oppressive thought comes to us that it will not be long before we

<sup>4</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 8. Used by permission.

too, and all our fellow actors, together with the stirring events of our times, will pass away and to those who come after us will seem little more than phantoms.

History, then, seems to be insignificant both because it is so brief in comparison with the vast age of the universe, and also because it seems always to be vanishing into the shadowy past. Moreover, it must be remembered that history consists largely of past events. Present events are but a small fraction, indeed, compared with the vast ocean of events that have passed. Not only that, but present events also, ere we can bat an eye, become a part of the same past.

This seeming insignificance of history is, however, but one side of the paradox. The other side is the apparent significance of history. In terms of the age of the cosmos, or of the sun, or even of the earth, history may seem very brief indeed, but importance cannot be measured so much in terms of length as in terms of the unfolding of capacities, the conscious realization of values, and the fulfilment of purposes. More will be said about this in the next chapter when we deal with man, the creature around whom the drama of history centers.

Again, granted that in comparison with the age of the cosmos, history, that is the human story, has been brief, yet, unless man deliberately commits suicide an amazingly long future seems to lie ahead of him.

The 10,000 million years which seems a possible future for the existence of life on earth is more than three times the past age of the earth, and more than 10,000 times the period through which humanity has so far existed on earth.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, basing his calculations on what astronomers have to say regarding the future of the earth, and the number of

<sup>5</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Universe Around Us* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1944), p. 287. Used by permission.

civilizations which have come to birth during the last six thousand years, Toynbee goes so far as to say that "there is time ahead of us for at least 1,743,000,000 civilizations to come into existence and to pass away."<sup>6</sup> A phenomenon that has such possibilities cannot be lightly brushed aside as of no consequence.

To those who object that no argument can be built upon the possibilities or the future of a process, the answer is: first, no attempt is being made to build an argument on man's future possibilities alone, due consideration will also be given to his past and present condition; and second, no process can possibly be understood, particularly so far as its ultimate significance is concerned, without also taking its probable future into consideration. Men certainly tend to judge a phenomenon not only by its past and present state but also by its future possibilities. That which has no discernible future, or at best an inconsequential future, has no real importance in the scheme of things, but on the other hand, that which has great possibilities, on any reasonable test, appears to have great significance. An atomic war may, of course, come and destroy civilization, but such a calamity is not inevitable, and even if it does come, it is not likely to wipe out the entire human race. A remnant may survive from whose efforts ultimately, say in ten thousand years, a greater civilization may arise, which, profiting by our follies, may yet build an enduring world community. More will be said on this point in other chapters.

Moreover, history cannot be lightly dismissed on the ground that it is always vanishing into the past. Once the past, too, was present. Human beings actually experienced the events. To them these events did not seem phantoms

<sup>6</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), Vol. IV, p. 10. Used by permission.



but real and heavily loaded with destiny; and they responded with the same burning zeal as we do today to the significant events of our times. No one can read a classic like Pericles' great funeral oration without realizing how truly real it was for him and for his listeners. In fact, it becomes real to us because here he expresses something that is universal, timeless, something to which the human mind and heart in every age will respond.

Consequently it is wrong to speak of the past as dead. It still lives and can live for us and in us and through us, if we really make it a part of ourselves. At any rate, if the present could be robbed of all its rich and priceless heritage from the past, it would become a phantom. Likewise, the past without a present that has real duration would be meaningless. For past and present to be meaningful, there must be a real sense of succession of events, of *before* and *after*. To lump them together into one eternal *now* is to rob them of all meaning. Thus past and present both seem to be real, and while closely and intimately related, yet are absolutely incapable of being reduced into the artificial, frozen unity of one eternal *now*. Moreover, history is always also anticipating the future and rushing toward it.

Finally, when what is now future to me arrives and becomes the present, it is found to consist of elements drawn from what is now present and from what now appears past but it is never a mere combination of the same old elements. There is always an element of novelty, of surprise. Hence, advance is possible, but this new element also makes it impossible ever to predict the future with precision. History repeats itself sufficiently, as we have already observed, so that the individual as well as the group can profit by past experience, but it is never mere duplication. Thus past and present and future are definitely related and

cannot be understood in isolation; and more than that, they seem to be in some sense real. This leads us to the problem of the reality of time; since time consists of our consciousness of the past, that which has been, and, as a matter of fact, never completely vanishes without some traces and effects; the present, that of which we are now conscious but which will soon change into the past; and the future, that which is not yet but which may be.

### THE REALITY OF TIME

History, by its very nature, is process, change, movement, from past to present and from present to future, and it therefore involves time. Thus it must be essentially temporal. It is also, of course, a process in space, but time is by far the most fundamental of the two. Deny the ontological reality of time, and history, robbed of all possible metaphysical significance, is reduced to a mere appearance which cannot possibly, in any real sense, be a manifestation of the ultimate.

Now while all philosophers have regarded time as in some sense real, many, in fact the whole illusionistic tribe from Parmenides and Shankara to Spinoza and Bradley, have tried to reduce it to a mere appearance; so utterly different from the colorless, motionless, valueless absolute at the heart of things that it becomes impossible for history to shed any metaphysical light whatever. Obviously, to follow it or any clues derived from it would lead us away from, rather than toward, ultimate reality. Bradley dismisses time as a contradictory appearance which cannot in any sense be an attribute of the timeless reality at the base of things.<sup>7</sup> There are also theologians, and some philosophers with a

<sup>7</sup> F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 209.

special interest in religion, such as Borden Parker Bowne, who deny the ontological reality of time. For Bowne, time is nothing more than "the subjective appearance of change."<sup>8</sup>

Philosophers have usually denied the ontological reality of time for one or more of five closely related reasons. First and foremost, Parmenides, Shankara, and their followers have insisted that change, which is so closely related to time, is nothing more than appearance, illusion, *maya*. The fundamental reality is the changeless absolute. Zeno even came to the defense of his teacher, Parmenides, with his three famous puzzles of motion.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless it is extremely difficult to see how the illusion of variety, individuality, change, and motion can arise from a changeless absolute. And as for Zeno's puzzles of motion, Bergson has shown that they are based upon the untenable assumption that the course of a moving object must of necessity consist of an infinite number of points instead of constituting one continuous whole. "The absurdity vanishes as soon as we adopt by thought the continuity of the real movement, a continuity of which every one of us is conscious whenever he lifts an arm or advances a step."<sup>10</sup>

The second reason often given is that the truths of mathematics and the laws of logic are more real than the changing, fluctuating events of time. In fact, Spinoza built his system upon mathematics. Since the truths of mathematics and logic are timeless and changeless, the conclusion is reached that reality is likewise timeless and changeless.

<sup>8</sup> Borden P. Bowne, *Metaphysics* (New York: American Book Co., 1916), p. 178. Used by permission.

<sup>9</sup> See Zeno, "The Puzzles of Motion," in C. M. Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), p. 310. Used by permission.

What Spinoza forgets is that the truths of mathematics and the laws of logic are one thing, while our concrete experience of time is quite another. If the former are ultimate, it is difficult to see how the appearance of time and concrete events, and how the whole phenomenal world of objects and forces, could spring from them. For after all, mathematics and logic are formal and abstract. They have no power whatever to function as productive causes. They are powerless to produce anything concrete. Moreover, the sense of time is really a presupposition of all our thinking, and consequently no abstract argument against its reality can prevail. Even in solving problems in geometry one cannot dispense with the consciousness of before and after. Each step in solving a problem requires time, and only after one problem has been solved is it possible to advance to the next.

The third reason, emphasized especially by Bradley, is the idea that time, as an ontological reality, involves certain inconsistencies, and that therefore it cannot be more than appearance. First of all, he insists that change must be relative to a permanent, and consequently it cannot be ontologically real.<sup>11</sup> However, in actual experience it seems that change is just as real as permanence. Both Heraclitus and Parmenides see aspects of the one truth which seems to embody both elements. The only way in which Bradley can get around this fact is by the very dubious route of denying that any metaphysical insight can come from experience, since all experience, he insists, is merely appearance.<sup>12</sup> The burden of proof certainly rests heavily upon Bradley to show that experience can shed no light on the nature of the ultimate; for after all, all of our knowledge is derived from the

<sup>11</sup> Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-7.

two roots: experience and rational reflection upon experience. Again, if change is relative to permanence, permanence is no less relative to change. These are two basic categories which reality seems to force upon us. They are really mutually relative to each other, and hence both seem to be genuine characteristics of ultimate reality; for each is meaningless without the other. Permanence is as unthinkable without reference to some degree of change as change is without some degree of permanence.

Bradley insists, in the second place, that present and past are really one, and he appeals to science for support.<sup>13</sup> However, as has already become evident from previous discussion, the most that can be proved is that they are related, but always in the time order of before and after. Moreover, for science to ignore time is for it to turn its back upon one of its own most basic concepts, namely the concept of evolution. In the third place, Bradley insists that the idea of the reality of time is inconsistent with the timeless element in human thought in its search for permanence.<sup>14</sup> What Bradley fails to see is that human thought always involves both change and identity, the timeless and the timely. Truth has two aspects, the timeless, changeless and permanent, and the timely, the changing and the impermanent. To disregard either is to do violence to the nature of the truth itself. Permanence is meaningless without change, change without permanence. Truth is always something more than any concrete, human embodiment amid the flux of time and place, but unless it finds such embodiment, it seems strangely abstract and unreal. In the next chapter we will see that there is a principle, and one alone that can tie the two together into a real and inseparable unity.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.



The fourth reason often advanced is the contention that there is no real duration, that the present has no real existence, that instead of past and present and future, there is really only one eternal *now*. This objection has already been dealt with in part, but it is so important that it must be considered again. The truth in this objection is the fact that past and present and future are related, that past and present and also the future, in so far as it is discernible, make sense only when considered together. But to deny the present simply because one cannot lay his hand on it and hold it still, to deny it because it is forever seeming to vanish into the past by becoming past, is as untenable as to deny the past and to reduce it to phantasy because the specific events cannot be recalled and experienced all over again in the same manner as originally. The present may be fleeting and thinner than a razor's edge, but nevertheless no experience is more real than duration, the persistence of certain phases of experience. At this very instant I am conscious of events which cannot be either past or future, but which constitute the bridge between past and future and hence must be labeled present. To label them as either past or future is to undermine the very basis of rationality and to promote chaos. Moreover, while some events do seem to race through the mind like lightning, two things must be remembered. First, even the swiftest event in mortal experience requires time. Lightning is in time, and even the speed of light can be measured. Second, there are experiences which seem never to come to an end. There are longer as well as shorter experiences, and it is possible for me to distinguish between experiences in terms of length, duration. While it is true, of course, that similar experiences are, to some extent, relative to each self, and may seem longer to some and shorter to others, yet in each

case some measure of duration is involved. Again, the very fact of being able to measure time in a way that is meaningful to all rational minds so that they can order and regulate their lives by these standard measurements seems to involve the reality of duration. If past and present and future were really one indissoluble unity, one eternal *now*, no measurements would be applicable, for all of our measurements presuppose both change and duration. In short, duration seems to be real.

Finally, there are those who, like Bowne, hold that time is wholly subjective. "Time is only the subjective appearance of change." "Time, then, is not an ontological fact but is essentially a function of self-conscious intelligence."<sup>15</sup> Brightman has subjected this view of Bowne to three pertinent criticisms on the basis of Bowne's own fundamental principles. First of all, he points out that on the basis of his personalism, Bowne should admit the ontological reality of time. For Bowne, as for all the personalists, personality is the key to the understanding of the ultimate nature of the universe; and, therefore, since time is an essential attribute of personality, it should have profound ontological significance for all personalists. Second, Bowne does not distinguish sufficiently between time and space.

Every person has, it is true, experiences in the space form. But every person also has experiences which are not spatial in their form. What is the location in space, or the shape and size of a moral obligation, the love of truth, the knowledge of algebra, or the understanding of purpose? Much of our experience is non-spatial, and space considerations are irrelevant to it. But all personal experience occurs at some time and refers to some (or all) time. Time is therefore of

<sup>15</sup> Borden P. Bowne, *Metaphysics* (New York: American Book Co., 1916), pp. 178, 186. Used by permission.

the essence of personality, human or divine, as space is not. Time is a more pervasive metaphysical category than is space.<sup>16</sup>

Third, Bowne, on the basis of his conception of time, is forced to the extreme of thinking of God in terms of a changeless, impassive absolute. "Time would be simply a movement in the finite mind, while for the infinite there would be an eternal now."<sup>17</sup> But this, as Brightman points out, is inconsistent with Bowne's contention that change has ontological reality and that being is activity.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Bowne is a Christian, and for Christianity time is real. God is active in history and reveals Himself through events in time.<sup>19</sup>

In the endeavor to answer the objections to the reality of time, most of the positive evidence for its ontological significance has been given in one way or another. It now remains to make this more explicit. First and foremost, time is real, because all of our knowledge arises from reflection upon experience, and time is one of the most real forms of experience—a form which, in fact, experience takes always and everywhere. The mind is capable of nonspatial experience, but nontemporal experience, on the contrary, is simply unthinkable. Permanence, identity, timeless truths there are, but man can only comprehend them by means of thoughts which follow the temporal order of before and after. It may well be that even God's experience takes this form; for a timeless absolute is static, changeless, motionless, incapable of either love or hate. All theists, and espe-

<sup>16</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, "Bowne: Eternalist or Temporalist," *The Personalist*, XXVIII, No. 3 (Summer, 1947), 262-63. Used by permission.

<sup>17</sup> Bowne, *op. cit.*, p. 178. Used by permission.

<sup>18</sup> Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-64.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

cially those within the Hebrew-Christian tradition, must of necessity be temporalists. The whole Bible story embodies a philosophy of history in which God is active as Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. In fact, the whole concept of redemptive love, as it finds expression in Hosea, in Second Isaiah, and even more in Christ, is meaningless, unless, in some way, time is real and significant for God.

The second reason why time is real in the ontological sense is the fact of evolution. Evolution implies change, development, growth in a certain direction, and these are in time. Moreover, "evolution implies a real persistence of the past in the present, a duration which is, as it were, a hyphen, a connecting link."<sup>20</sup> Nor can evolution be lightly dismissed as being nothing but appearance, incapable of shedding any real light on the nature of the universe. It is, in fact, one of the major tendencies of the universe. First of all, there is cosmic evolution, the evolution of the stars, including our sun; second, geological evolution, the development of the earth; third, organic or biological; and fourth, mental, social, moral, and spiritual evolution. In short, there are few concepts more characteristic and all embracing. Bergson even goes so far as to call evolution "the very essence of life."<sup>21</sup>

Strangely enough, du Noüy, in his *Human Destiny*, does not recognize evolution as an argument for the ontological reality of time. No thoughtful scientist of our day has made a more convincing case for theism on the basis of the teleological significance of evolution than has du Noüy. This marvelous upward surge of life in a universe that is running down could not have come as the result of chance. Since it

<sup>20</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), p. 22. Used by permission.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

seems to be heading toward a goal, namely, man and the development of his moral and spiritual capacities, he (du Noüy) finds purpose and hence God manifested through the process.<sup>22</sup> But in order to absolve God from any responsibility for the mistakes of nature, he falls back upon the idea of the timeless absolute, whose time span is so great that these little, insignificant imperfections escape His notice altogether.

To an imaginary being, with a life span of ten thousand million years, evolution would seem very rapid. To God, whom we cannot even conceive in relation to time, it may well have been "instantaneous."<sup>23</sup>

How such a timeless absolute could initiate and direct such a process in time, involving progress toward a distant goal by means of innumerable detailed steps and minute processes, du Noüy fails to explain. Again, while du Noüy is extremely anxious to preserve God's omnipotence, he fails to see that he has actually robbed Him of two capacities which make Him significant so far as man is concerned, namely, *omniscience*, in the sense of being able to understand our trials and tribulations, and *love*, the ability to sympathize and redeem. The really significant events of life as experienced by the individual, and even by the mass of individuals—births, joys, sorrows, tragedies, deaths—have no real significance for du Noüy's God. God does not know, and hence cannot appreciate, the meaningful details of the human story. He sees only the far distant goal, the grand, magnificent ending as though it were already accomplished. It would seem that a God capable of initiating and guiding such a process would also be able to understand and fully

<sup>22</sup> du Noüy, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-52, 103-41.

<sup>23</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 200. Used by permission.



appreciate all of the details. Thus it seems logical to expect such a Being to be capable of viewing all experience, as no creature possibly can, from both the microscopic and the telescopic points of view.

In the third place, time must be real, because to deny it ontological meaning is not only to deny the implications of the time experience, and the facts of evolution, but also the validity and relevance of another very important realm of human experience, namely, the ethical. Now man's capacity for moral experience is as basic as his capacity for sense experience, for esthetic experience, and for mystical experience. Again, as du Noüy has shown in a masterful way, the moral life is not a mere "fluctuation," but rather it seems to be the goal toward which the process of evolution is heading.<sup>24</sup> Thus morality appears to be a condition of human survival. All the greatest teachers of mankind are agreed that man cannot live like the brutes without courting destruction. Hence ethical ideals and moral experience cannot be brushed aside, as some moderns have tried to do, without courting destruction.

In spite of his great appreciation of the relevance and place of ethics, du Noüy, however, like many theistic eternalists, fails to realize that a denial of the ontological reality of time tends to lower man's estimate of the importance of ethical relationships and ethical conduct toward others. My relations to my fellows are never abstract but always concrete. Hence, my actions toward them, as well as my attitudes, are always in time; but if time has no ontological significance and is mere appearance, and if eternity alone matters, then my actions and attitudes lose their significance. They also degenerate into mere appearances. In short, it does not matter too much how I treat my fellows. Shadows

<sup>24</sup> du Noüy, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-41.

have no real significance and can be ignored. Thus this tendency to discount time tends to belittle the importance of this present life. In fact, at the basis of all cases of extreme asceticism, there lurks the idea that this present world, which is in time, and this temporal existence, really have no value except as a training ground for the next. The main thing is to save one's own soul. Hence one can be indifferent to the needs of one's fellows and let the world go to the dogs.<sup>25</sup> Thus it becomes evident that this problem of the reality of time is not merely theoretical; it has very important practical consequences indeed.

By way of summary, then, it can be said that the case for the ontological reality of time rests on at least three chief lines of factual evidence: first, the testimony of immediate, self-conscious experience; second, the testimony of evolution; and third, the testimony of ethics. To this may also be added the weight of the testimony of many great thinkers. The Prophets of Israel believe in the reality of time; so do Hegel and Toynbee and Bergson, most of the personalists, and likewise giants such as Alfred North Whitehead and S. Alexander.<sup>26</sup>

### DOES HISTORY, THEN, THROW LIGHT ON ULTIMATE REALITY?

This crucial question was raised and given some consideration in Chapter 1 in the discussion of the positivistic denial of the possibility of metaphysics. There the conclusion was reached that the positivist is unduly pessimistic as well as unduly dogmatic, and that a metaphysics of history,

<sup>25</sup> For extreme asceticism, see W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, pp. 124-31.

<sup>26</sup> For Whitehead's view, see his *Process and Reality*; for Alexander's, see *Space, Time, and Deity*, in two volumes.

not in terms of a final and absolute certainty but in terms of a reasonable, a moral, and a practical certainty, remains an open possibility. Stress was also laid on the fact that man cannot, even if he tries, for long ignore the metaphysical question. He is the metaphysical animal who cannot down the question: Why? Moreover, both the impact of the forces of nature and the impact of the circumstances of history force him to hazard the metaphysical venture. Again, history, as well as nature, seems to give man certain clues which if followed, that is critically examined and investigated, may lead to real insight into the nature of reality.

Thus far only one of these clues has been examined, namely, the impression history gives that the magnificent human story may have metaphysical significance, that it seems to be in some sense the manifestation of what is ultimately real. We have already seen that of the six general types or schools of the philosophy of history, only the thinkers belonging to the illusionistic and positivistic would take serious issue with this idea. While not agreed as to the nature of the ultimate, the other four are agreed that there is an ultimate and that history in some sense reveals it. Surely, so far as the religions of the world are concerned, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians would agree with this point of view, along with some Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucianists. Again, on this point the very greatest philosophers of history, the Prophets, St. Augustine, Hegel, Marx, Spengler, and Toynbee are agreed. To Marx it reveals the physical, economic, and social forces as ultimate. To Spengler it reveals Fate, but to the Prophets, St. Augustine, Hegel, and Toynbee, the Living God.

Now if this first clue proves anything, it proves that the positivists and the illusionists are wrong. History is not

insignificant, for it is a process involving time and change; and our investigation has shown that there are reasons which outweigh all illusionistic and positivistic objections for supposing that time and change are really basic characteristics and expressions of ultimate reality. If they are appearances, they are appearances which reveal something of the nature of the ultimate, just as the highest wave is still a revelation or a manifestation of the basic substance which is found in even the darkest depths of the ocean.

Consequently, if time and change are real, if they have ontological meaning, then the first clue, the impression of so many that history seems to be a manifestation of ultimate reality, constitutes a real insight. If later it can also be shown that the events and processes and structure of history also imply purpose, the result will be some form of theism. At this stage of the venture, however, only two things are clear. First and foremost, history does seem to have real metaphysical significance. It is in some sense a manifestation of that which is ultimate. In fact it is not too much to say that history is a higher, clearer, and more significant manifestation of the ultimate than is nature. For nature seems to be the environment, the framework, and the stage for this majestic drama. Through nature the ultimate manifests itself through blind, unconscious things, forces, and impersonal laws. Through history, it is able to manifest itself through the higher order of conscious beings with purposes, a sense of values and goals. Consequently, purposes and values can be realized which are impossible on the impersonal plane of nature. More will be said about this in our consideration of the second clue.

Second, since it has been shown that time and change must have metaphysical significance, this means that the ultimate cannot be static and motionless, a changeless abso-

lute. It also means that time must in some sense be real to the ultimate. This fact has definitely theistic implications, for time can hardly be real to an abstract, impersonal principle. Nevertheless it is too early to press any one specific view. If this becomes possible at all, it cannot be done until all of the first five empirical clues have been given due consideration.

In pursuance of this course, man must next be duly considered, since he constitutes the second clue. For not only is man the chief actor in the drama of history, but in him, and in him alone, we may also find a reasonable principle of explanation for certain puzzling questions raised by the present chapter. Chief among these are the age-old questions of permanence and change, time and eternity, unity and variety, the one and the many.



## Chapter 4

### THE SECOND CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS CONSIDERATION OF MAN

#### ORIGIN

It is impossible to understand fully the nature and meaning of anything by merely investigating and discovering its origin. Yet a knowledge of origins is very important. If the waters of a stream are salty or impure, a journey upstream may reveal the basic cause. Likewise a knowledge of man's origin gives us a better understanding of his essential nature as it is today. Obviously, without a knowledge of man's lowly origin, it is really impossible to understand certain aspects of human nature.

Now it is interesting to observe that man is the only creature who reflects on his own origin and destiny. The creation myths of all nations show that man speculated about his origin long before the beginnings of modern science. Among primitives, in fact, there are almost as many creation stories as there are tribes, and some tribes even have several different accounts. Many of these are, of course, crude, childish, and grotesque. In most of them, however, there is some conception of a god or gods creating man, and all of them present a real attempt on the part of man to fathom the secret of his own genesis and the ultimate meaning of human life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For early creation stories see *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 205; and *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, pp. 226-31.

The most important of these creation stories, at least so far as the West is concerned, are the two Hebrew accounts as found in the first and second chapters of Genesis. The oldest of these, which is found in the second chapter, goes back to the author of the J documents about 850 B.C. It represents God in a quite anthropomorphic fashion, molding man out of the earth and forming woman out of a rib taken from man. The other account is found in Genesis 1:1-2:3. It comes from the later source P and constitutes one of the sublimest poems ever written. Both stories go back ultimately to Babylonian and even Sumerian sources, but the Hebrew stories show a remarkable ethical and theological advance.<sup>2</sup>

In both Hebrew accounts man is created last by a special Divine Creative Act. More than that, man alone of all creatures is created in the Divine Image, thereby giving him pre-eminence as the star and crown of creation. The sequel to the story of creation is found in Genesis 3, the story of the fall and the beginnings of sin and evil. Man, having been created perfect and blissful in an earthly paradise, falls from his high estate and brings misery upon himself and all his descendants when he disobeys God's command by eating the forbidden fruit.

The Christian Church took over this old Hebrew story of the creation and fall of man, and by adding to it its theory of redemption and last things, a world view was developed which was essentially apocalyptic and which found its best and perhaps most comprehensive expression in St. Augustine's *City of God*. At any rate, for nearly nineteen hundred years the old Genesis story of the creation of man remained largely unquestioned. Then, during the middle

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the significance of these early Hebrew thinkers see Chapter 2, pages 20-21, 24.

of the last century, Charles Darwin struck the decisive blow from which the tale never recovered, just as earlier, Copernicus, Galileo, Sir Isaac Newton, and the rest absolutely undermined the older cosmogony.

Here, then, is the essence of the story of the origin of man as science has traced it. Man's origin cannot be traced back to a single, sudden creative act. It goes back far into the misty past, perhaps about a billion years, to a few very simple cells. Just how life began and why it appeared is a mystery and a miracle which even science cannot explain. All that it can do is to point to the fact that when conditions became favorable, life appeared in certain elementary forms as evidenced by the remains in the earliest rocks.<sup>3</sup> During the course of the long ages many kinds of animal life appeared, including monsters. Finally the mammals arrived on the scene. At first they were insignificant creatures, perhaps only a few inches long. For countless millions of years these tiny animals vegetated, while gigantic reptiles ruled the earth; but about fifty million years ago the age of reptiles finally came to an end, and the age of mammals began. Out of these queer little primitive mammals many new and strange forms of animal life developed, including the primates. Among these latter was the ancestor of man.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, after many millions of years, the first submen appeared. The first of these, *Pithecanthropus*, the Java ape man, probably lived about 500,000 years ago. The evidence

<sup>3</sup> R. S. Lull, *Organic Evolution*, pp. 693-94; R. T. Chamberlin, "The Origin and Early Stages of the Earth," in H. H. Newman (ed.), *The Nature of the World and of Man*, p. 53; and Newman, "The Nature and Origin of Life," in Newman, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-92.

<sup>4</sup> Lull, *op. cit.*, pp. 670-72; L. du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, pp. 75-77, 93-99; and A. S. Romer, "The Evolution of the Vertebrates," in Newman, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-42.

of his existence consists of fossil remains found in central Java in 1891. Closely related to *Pithecanthropus*, but perhaps arriving a bit later, is the Peking man. Other interesting examples of submen, but farther advanced, are the Heidelberg man, about 300,000 to 375,000 years ago, the Piltdown man, about 150,000 years ago, and the Neanderthal man, about 50,000 years ago. These races of submen were followed about 25,000 years ago by the first true men, the remarkable Cro-Magnon race. They were men with splendid physiques and with true human heads and faces. They were tall and slender, the height of the average male being six feet, one and a half inches. There is also evidence of a higher mental and spiritual life. They were a very artistic race, and they also possessed a religion with a well-developed belief in immortality. But after flourishing for a time they declined and were in turn succeeded, about ten thousand years ago, by modern man.<sup>5</sup>

With the arrival of the first real men, about 25,000 years ago, evolution on the purely physical plane seems to have ceased. In fact some think that a certain amount of devolution may have set in.<sup>6</sup> But evolution ceased on the physical plane only to go forward on a much higher plane. "His future evolution, in so far as it is progressive, will be mental and spiritual rather than physical, and as such will be the logical conclusion of the marvelous results of organic evolution."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This discussion of human evolution is based upon a comparison of the following: Lull, *op. cit.*, pp. 675-89; Romer, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-48; Newman, "Animal Evolution," in S. Mathews (ed.), *Contributions of Science to Religion*, pp. 198-203; du Noüy, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99; and F. W. Blackmar, *History of Human Society*, pp. 57-81.

<sup>6</sup> Lull, *op. cit.*, p. 691.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Swann Lull, *Organic Evolution*, Rev. ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), p. 691. Used by permission.

## THE NATURE OF MAN

Perhaps the most characteristic fact about man, as distinguished from the lower animals, is his strange dual nature, together with his consciousness of it. No one, except perhaps the Apostle Paul, has ever surpassed Pascal in describing the paradox of man.

What chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe! <sup>8</sup>

There are two types of thinkers who are equally in error concerning the nature of man. The first are the Calvinists. Basing his theology on the old Genesis story, John Calvin taught that originally God had created man perfect, rationally and morally, but Adam's fall corrupted the nature of all of his descendants in the form of a hereditary taint. As a result, man is a depraved creature, wholly unworthy of God's mercy or consideration, deserving only the Divine contempt and wrath.

Modern Calvinists do not accept the old story of man's fall literally; nor would they go as far as John Calvin or his early American disciple, Jonathan Edwards, in disparaging man. Karl Barth probably goes farther than any other modern Calvinist. Before "the mighty, holy, and eternal God," men are "so impotent, so unholy, and mortal." Man's misery is "the misery of one who has departed from God, fights against Him, and is His enemy in whatever He

<sup>8</sup> Blaise Pascal, "Thoughts," trans. W. F. Trotter, in Charles W. Eliot (ed.), *The Harvard Classics* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corp., 1910), Vol. XLVIII, p. 144. Used by permission.



does.”<sup>9</sup> In this last statement, in particular, the ghost of the old Calvinism is evident. This same ghost also haunts many another modern theologian. Reinhold Niebuhr certainly tries hard to do justice to the higher nature of man as well as to man’s possibilities.<sup>10</sup> Yet in his extreme emphasis on man’s creaturely limitations, especially in rational capacity, and his continual dwelling on man’s sinful pride in the presence of a transcendent God, one cannot fail seeing the bones of the old Calvinism sticking through.<sup>11</sup> Man must, it is true, be made aware of his limitations, and especially of his proneness to pride and his abuse of the will to power, but a continual dwelling on these things cannot but fail in the end to produce failure of nerve and paralysis of creative effort.<sup>12</sup>

The second group consists of the mental and spiritual children of the Renaissance and the disciples of Rousseau. The ideal of the Middle Ages was monastic. The Church tried hard to ignore the social and sexual sides of man’s nature. It also tended to magnify God so greatly, and the life to come, that man as an individual and the values of this present life were largely forgotten. The Renaissance

<sup>9</sup> Karl Barth, *God in Action*, pp. 17, 126.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*; Vol. I, pp. 123–24, 268, Vol. II, p. 1; and *Beyond Tragedy*, pp. 211, 264.

<sup>11</sup> For example, *Faith and History*, pp. 102–19; *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I, pp. 137–41; and *Beyond Tragedy*, pp. 210–12, 265–66. Niebuhr, of course, repudiates the doctrine of total depravity, but he dwells so much on man’s sinful pride that the effect is a tendency toward pessimism and complete distrust of man. To be saved, we must have faith in man as well as God.

<sup>12</sup> Niebuhr has not reached this stage of mundane pessimism, and probably never will; for there is still enough liberalism in him to counteract the quietism to which Calvinism, with its disparagement of man and human effort, logically leads. Barth, however, has almost reached this stage. See his article, “No Christian Marshall Plan,” *Christian Century*, December 8, 1948, pp. 1330–33. Extreme pessimism concerning human nature may also lead toward militarism. There is a great danger that the Neo-orthodox theology may seriously hamper the peace movement in the churches.

was a revolt with a vengeance. It emphasized the importance of this present life and of man as a creative individual. In fact, so extreme was its emphasis on these aspects of life that there was a decided tendency toward sensuality from which even the Church itself did not completely escape.

Rousseau, in his emphasis on the individual and on instinct and feeling, was a product of the Renaissance and in some respects he even went farther. He held that man differs from the brute only in degree, that the natural man is good, and that civilization corrupts. The apostles of inevitable progress, as well as many modern humanists, have also upheld the doctrine of the natural goodness of man. Revolting against the ultra-Puritanical emphasis on the depravity of man, they have gone to the opposite extreme in almost ignoring the fact of man's tendencies toward evil. To some extremists, indeed, sin is no more than maladjustment to be cured through education, sufficient vitamins, and psychoanalysis.

Both Calvin and Rousseau and their modern disciples are wrong; yet both are also half right. The truth in Calvinism is the fact which every great ethical teacher has pointed out, namely, man's lower nature and his proneness to evil and the irrational. Man is subject to the same basic drives as the animal, but most of his trouble comes from his failure and stubborn unwillingness to integrate them into a coherent pattern of life. Man is capable of being more lustful than any animal. He is also capable of being more brutal and cruel, since he has a freedom and an intelligence which the brute lacks. Regarding adolescent boys, Plato makes this interesting observation: "Now of all wild things a boy is the most difficult to handle; just because he more than any other has a fount of intelligence in him which has not yet 'run

clear,' he is the craftiest, most mischievous, and unruliest of brutes." <sup>13</sup>

Again, like the animal, man is by nature slothful. One of the most discouraging things about man is his desire for comfort to the point of being unwilling to do anything difficult unless compelled to do so. This accounts, in large measure, for the extreme slowness of human progress. Moreover, as Niebuhr has reminded us, man is self-centered, seeking to force the world to revolve around him, and even at times ready to wreck anything, however good and beautiful, if it does not feed his ego. Out of this grows his false pride and love of power. Men have been willing to shed the blood of millions and to make other millions miserable just for the sake of dominating a state for a few brief years and to hear their fame sung by the servile masses. Moreover, there are times when man really wants to be irrational and deliberately follows his animal impulses rather than his reason and his conscience. This has been called sin.

It must be granted then, that there is much truth in Calvinism. Man is not naturally good. There is an aspect of his nature which is irrational, animal-like, and even demonic. Again, some of the worst evils come from the perversion of his greatest endowments—sex, intelligence, the ability to discover and make use of nature's secrets, and the capacity for political organization. There is much truth in the old story of a fall. Every man knows something of this experience, not in terms of something which happened once long ago and has operated as a curse ever since, but in terms of something strangely contemporary. Man falls when he fails to rise to the best possibilities of every situation. In short, the evidence shows that there is something radically

<sup>13</sup> *The Laws of Plato*, trans. A. E. Taylor (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1934), Book VII, 808, p. 193. Used by permission.

wrong with man, that there always has been, and always will be.

If this were the only aspect of man's nature, we might well despair. Fortunately, there is another side, an aspect to which not only the disciples of Rousseau and the humanists, but the Bible itself, together with Plato and the greatest philosophers of the ages, bear witness. In fact, the Bible and the philosophers do far more real justice to this higher aspect of man's life, of which his true humanity consists as distinguished from the brute, than do the others.

Man is *homo sapiens*—man, the wise. "All the dignity of man," says Pascal, "consists in thought. Thought is therefore by its nature a wonderful and incomparable thing."<sup>14</sup> The animals can think after a fashion, that is concretely, but man can think abstractly, universally, and systematically. He is thus free from the tyranny of the immediate and can rise to a plane of mental life of which the animal knows nothing. Man's science, his power over nature, is due to mind. Again, by virtue of being essentially a mind, a self-conscious personality, man can reflect on his experience, as no animal can, and this capacity is the root from which all philosophy springs.

Moreover, not only does man seek truth, but he also seeks and creates beauty. He is the artist, the musician, the poet, the architect. This artistic ability clearly manifested itself some 25,000 years ago with the remarkable Cro-Magnon race and has been one of man's most treasured possessions ever since. It has flowered in every civilization. Take away beauty from life and it becomes humdrum and to a great extent uninteresting. Finally, it is through his esthetic

<sup>14</sup> Blaise Pascal, "Thoughts," trans. W. F. Trotter, in Charles W. Eliot (ed.), *The Harvard Classics* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corp., 1910), Vol. XLVIII, p. 122. Used by permission.

capacity that man becomes conscious of a supersensible ideal of beauty which he must pursue but which he can never completely realize.

Even more marvelous than man's aesthetic capacity is his moral capacity. Though probably not as old as his artistic ability, yet there are moral codes and other evidences of moral life in all the great civilizations. One can observe its first real appearance in the modern sense in the Sumerian civilization, but it is in Egypt that it first fully flowered.<sup>15</sup> In a later chapter more attention will be given to the development of this, as well as to all of man's higher capacities, that is, the part and role which they have played on the stage of history. At any rate, the fact of man's moral nature plainly shows that while man is capable of selling himself to evil, he is also capable of giving himself to an ideal of goodness, in fact, of devoting himself so unselfishly to an ideal as to be willing to die rather than prove disloyal. There is something of the angel as well as of the brute in man. Both Gandhi and Hitler belonged to the human race.

Finally, there is man's religious capacity. The brute can be completely content with mere material satisfactions; but however much man may crave them, he can never satisfy his whole nature by attempting to submerge it in the merely material and physical. Man is essentially mind or soul with spiritual needs and attributes, and it may well be that the religious consciousness dawned long before either the aesthetic or the moral. In the presence of the awe-inspiring forces of nature and the dark mysteries of death, man early manifested an awe and reverence and a contemplative attitude that was more than the blind, unreflective fear which the animals show. Moreover, religion became a social bond,

<sup>15</sup> See J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.



a means of tying men together. And from these crass primitive forms, largely the work of the crude, childish imagination and badly mixed with magic, there gradually developed the great religious systems of the world in which the mystical and the moral joined hands.

Pascal has truly written:

It is dangerous to make man see too clearly his equality with the brutes without showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to make him see his greatness too clearly, apart from his vileness. It is still more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both. But it is very advantageous to show him both. Man must not think that he is on a level either with the brutes or with the angels, nor must he be ignorant of both sides of his nature; but he must know both.<sup>16</sup>

This strange dual nature of man raises the question as to why man should be made thus. The ancient Hebrews found a satisfactory answer to this question in the story of a primitive innocence followed by a fall. The Christian Church adopted the story and was satisfied with the same answer until quite recently; but this simple solution does not carry conviction today. A better answer must be found.

It is obvious that man's dual nature must be understood in terms of his origin. His lower nature harks back to his animal ancestry,<sup>17</sup> while his higher nature is the result of

<sup>16</sup> Blaise Pascal, "Thoughts," trans. W. F. Trotter, in Charles W. Eliot (ed.), *The Harvard Classics* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corp., 1910), Vol. XLVIII, p. 134. Used by permission.

<sup>17</sup> As Niebuhr has pointed out, evil in man is never as simple as in the brute; for in man, natural necessity is always mingled with large elements of freedom. As a result, it is much more complex and subject to endless variations and transformations. See Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, pp. 16-20. Man, as a creature endowed with reason, a measure of freedom, and a sense of moral responsibility, must do all within his power to control and direct the disorderly impulses of his lower nature. The difficulty of the task in no way relieves him of this primary duty as a human being. At the same time, the fact must be recognized that these impulses toward evil are not of man's making. He did not create his lower nature. It is a part of his original endowment.

the strange, miraculous, seemingly purposive upward surge of the evolutionary process. This explanation, in its turn, provokes the deeper metaphysical question as to the ultimate nature of the universe in which such a creative process, resulting in a creature with such a dual nature, could occur. It seems that the only answer or explanation of evolution would have to be some form of theism as du Noüy has shown, but it must be some form which will do justice to both aspects of man's nature.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MAN

As in the case of history in general, so likewise in the case of man in particular, the question of metaphysical significance must be faced. Here again we are confronted with a paradox. On the one hand, man seems so insignificant. First of all, there is his lowly origin. Instead of being able to boast of being created in a special way through a simple and sudden act of God, it has become evident that man originated in the same way as the animals. Likewise, as an individual, he is subject to the same cycle of birth, growth, maturity, old age, and death and also to the basic animal drives such as hunger, thirst, sex, self-preservation, gregariousness. Worse yet, when we call to mind the fact that he can be more lustful, cruel, brutal, and destructive than any animal, his boastful superiority seems to vanish.

Again, so far as space and time are concerned, man seems relatively unimportant. In comparison with the vastness of the universe, physically speaking at least, man seems less than a microbe living on a grain of sand. Moreover, in terms of the time process, that is in comparison to the age of the universe, the earth, or the time of the origin of life itself, he

seems but a spark in the night which burns brightly for a moment only to go out forever.

Finally, his mind is limited. In the face of the vastness of the universe both in space and in time, the human mind senses its finiteness. Even man's best thought is but a good guess. Absolute knowledge in terms of absolute accuracy and certainty seems forever beyond his reach. Even the wise Socrates insisted that he knew nothing, and the Apostle Paul ended his great prose poem on love with a confession of the limitations of human knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, after living for a few brief years, not nearly so long as some animals, man must die; and at least so far as our senses are concerned, he goes into the eternal silence from which he never awakens.

These contemplations of man's seeming insignificance would overwhelm us and ruin all attempts at either philosophy or religion if there were not another side. The finite aspects of human life to which the above facts point must, of course, be admitted. Painful as it may seem at times, man is finite, limited, frail, mortal, a creature, and not a god. Again, his kinship to the animal kingdom is based on such a mass of facts that it must be admitted by all thoughtful men. In short, man's physical limitations, together with his limited knowledge, cannot be denied, and any philosophy which ignores them must be judged hopelessly inadequate.

Nevertheless, man's seeming insignificance, as in the case of history in general, is but one aspect of the truth. First of all, so far as origins are concerned, even though a comprehension of origins increases our knowledge in terms of a total view, yet in the final analysis origins alone can never determine the value or the significance of a phenomenon.

<sup>18</sup> I Cor. 13:12.

This erroneous notion that origins determine value or significance Brightman has rightly called "the fallacy of primitivism."

The person who is obsessed with beginnings, however, is often too easily satisfied, and is less rational than the wondering child. Such a person supposes that the first stage of the development of any process reveals what that process really is. If he finds that the first stage of morality was the mores of the group, he is certain that morality is nothing but group mores. If he learns that the first stage of astronomy was a kind of astrology, he declares that astronomy is nothing but astrology.<sup>19</sup>

Then, in the second place, as has been pointed out before, man seems to be the goal toward which the evolutionary process is driving, and especially the development of man's higher capacities. It stands to reason then, that if man is the goal toward which evolution is driving, that since evolution is one of the chief characteristics of the universe, therefore man cannot be wholly insignificant but on the contrary comes heavily laden with metaphysical meaning and implication.

Third, it has become evident from previous discussion that man's real significance inheres in his higher capacities: mental, esthetic, moral, and spiritual. These must now be examined more closely for possible metaphysical implications. First of all, the self-conscious human mind has profound metaphysical meaning. Though in many ways limited by a physical body and a material environment, yet it is not in any sense physical or material; and that it stands in a higher order than nature is evident both from man's ability to direct his body, often in the face of stubborn resistance

<sup>19</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 37. Used by permission.

from natural impulses, and also from his ability increasingly to make nature his slave.

Thou hast made him but little lower than God,  
And dost crown him with glory and honor!  
Thou makest him ruler over the works of thy hands,  
Thou hast put all things under his feet.<sup>20</sup>

Herein lies one of man's greatest dangers as well as one of his real possibilities and marks of true greatness.

The human mind has still deeper metaphysical implications. Perhaps the most important of these is best expressed by Reinhold Niebuhr in the following from his *Nature and Destiny of Man*:

As a creature who is involved in flux but who is conscious of the fact that he is so involved, he cannot be totally involved. A spirit who can set time, nature, and the world and being *per se* into juxtaposition to himself and inquire after the meaning of these things, proves that in some sense he stands outside and beyond them.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, by means of his reflective self-consciousness through memory, reason, and imagination, man can both experience and transcend time. The human mind and spirit has an infinite outreach. In a flash it can think back to, and even beyond, the beginnings of the stellar universe, some ten billions of years! Likewise it can look forward, far beyond ten billion years, into the future. In short, it can contemplate both time and eternity and bind them into the unity of its own rational self-consciousness.

Moreover, the mind of man can bind together permanence and change. Change, as was made evident in Chapter 3, along with time, is fundamental to all self-conscious

<sup>20</sup> Psa. 8:5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), Vol. I, p. 124. Used by permission.



experience; but at the same time there also exists in the human mind a principle of permanence. As over against its changing experiences, as registered in changing states of consciousness, the mind preserves its own self-conscious unity, for only as it does so is it able to respond rationally to change. The same applies to the old problem of the one and the many. On the one hand, the mind observes its many pulses of consciousness, but, on the other hand, it preserves its own one essential center of self-conscious unity as judge and referee.

Thus in the self-conscious mind and spirit of man we seem to have found the answer to the puzzle which remained unanswered at the end of Chapter 3. In other words, as we discovered in Chapter 3, permanence and change, unity and diversity, these opposites constitute fundamental aspects of the universe. The universe remains, yet changes, is one, yet many. How can these opposites exist together? The answer is that there must be some principle or bond of unity capable of binding them together. Since the human mind is the only thing capable of such a miracle, it stands to reason that it must furnish us a clue to the meaning of history and the secret of the universe. There also must be a Cosmic Mind capable of embracing and preserving these opposites, as they exist in history and in the universe, within the compass of its experience.

The other higher aspects of human nature, namely, the aesthetic, the moral, and the spiritual or mystical, also have metaphysical implications. In the aesthetic experience, at its highest and best, the soul sees an ideal which can never be reached within time. This ideal seems to be more than human. The poet, the musician, the artist, the architect do not create it. They discover it, and they become truly creative only as they follow its fair form. It seems to be objec-

tive, to be more than human, to have genuine metaphysical significance. The chief reason why present-day music expresses so little real greatness is because too many musicians have become materialists, relativists, cynics, and hence trivial. The same applies to most modern artists and poets. They have lost their vision, the belief in the absoluteness of their ideal which constitutes the basic condition for real creativity in art. The aesthetic capacity of man, then, seems to have metaphysical meaning. It seems to put man in touch with an ideal of beauty that is superhuman and eternal. Another indication of the metaphysical meaning of the beautiful seems to be the uplifting, sublime, more than earthly awareness which it is capable of arousing. Who has not had this experience when gazing into the heart of a North Dakota sunset, or into the starlit heavens under a Texas sky, or upon viewing the New England woods in October, or upon reading Milton or Wordsworth, or when thrilling to the majestic strains of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus"?

If the aesthetic capacity has metaphysical significance, then the moral seems to have even more. Mention has already been made of how du Noüy shows that the real aim of the evolutionary process seems to be chiefly the development of this capacity. And if there is something alluring about the aesthetic ideal, the moral ideal is nothing short of compelling, a Divine Imperative, to those who have reached the highest levels of moral attainment and are in the best position to know. In conscience, the sense of duty, of moral compulsion, the Prophets of Israel thought they heard the Voice of God, and though often mistaken as to details, history seems to have validated their fundamental insights as will be shown later. Socrates likewise heard that Voice and obeyed it; so did Zoroaster, and Jesus most magnificently of

all. Again, to the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, the sense of duty, the moral imperative, became the basis of his belief not only in God but also in freedom and immortality, and in fact constituted the real basis of metaphysics, that is in so far as he believed that metaphysics is possible.<sup>22</sup> That it is more than the blind voice of nature seems evident from the fact which Kant observed, namely, that it calls upon man to submit his natural impulses to a higher law which transcends nature because nature is ordered to obey. No one has expressed this truth in a better way in our day than du Noüy in the following remarkable statement:

Up to the birth of conscience, the being who was to become man only differed from his ancestors morphologically. He was subject to the laws of nature, to the laws of evolution, he had to obey, and that was right. The moment he asked himself the question as to whether an act was "good" or whether another was "better," he acquired a liberty denied to the animals. . . . The truth is that in man, and in man alone, the possibility of this choice has been transformed into a moral idea, whereas this is not the case in any other species. When this occurred, man took another leap and increased the gap which already separated him from the other primates; the new orientation of his evolution was clearly indicated. Henceforth, contrary to all others, in order to evolve *he must no longer obey Nature*. He must criticize and control his desires which were previously the only Law.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, conscience at its best seems to be more than the voice of society. It is the capacity through which the moral law finds expression which in the person of the prophet criticizes society, the mores and conventions, and thus

<sup>22</sup> Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, pp. 1-3, 146-47, 149-58. For an excellent selection from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* see A. E. Avey, *Readings in Philosophy*, pp. 258-64.

<sup>23</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 109. Used by permission.

moral progress, about which more will be said later, becomes possible.

Finally, there is man's mystical or religious capacity. This is older than the moral capacity, or at least it began to flower earlier; but in the higher religions the moral and the religious join hands. Through the religious capacity, as through the moral, man seems to come in touch with Ultimate Reality. All men, including even the seemingly irreligious, probably have some kind of mystical awareness, however dim and fleeting, sometime in their lives, as the almost universal presence of religion as an established form seems to show. The mystical experience at its best is not so much a mere feeling as an awareness, to the mystic at least, of Another, a deeper Reality. It finds its classical expression in the great ethical mystics above whom Jesus towers head and shoulders.

In the mystical experience man thinks he comes into a more direct and immediate and personal relationship with the Ultimate. Not all mystics by any means have been theists. Many have been pantheists and some even agnostics; but no less an authority than Pratt gives his judgment that, taking mysticism as a whole, the majority have not been pantheists and that there is nothing in the nature of mysticism itself which rules out the theistic explanation.<sup>24</sup> In short, if the mental, the aesthetic, and the moral capacities of man have metaphysical value and meaning, it would appear that the mystical may have even more. "The testimony of the religious consciousness through thirty centuries," says Pratt, "is not without cosmic significance."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 471-72. For marked evidences of theism even among India's mystics, see N. Macnicol, *Indian Theism*.

<sup>25</sup> James Bissett Pratt, *Can We Keep the Faith?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 130. Used by permission.

A consideration of all the facts relative to man's higher capacities, of which his true humanity consists, drives one to the conclusion that human personality must be laden with the profoundest metaphysical meaning. On the one hand, man and the development of his highest capacities appears to be the goal of the evolutionary process, while on the other, these same capacities seem to be windows, however dim, through which one may catch many fleeting glimpses of the Ultimate.

### RELATION TO HISTORY

There is a reason why, in any philosophy of history, due consideration must be given to man as a clue. The chief reason, at any rate, is the simple fact that without man there could be no history. First of all, because man is the chief actor in this strange drama. Nature but serves as the environment, the background, the stage. And, so far as the animals are concerned, their individual histories, as well as the histories of their kind, are hardly important enough to philosophize about, since they lack the higher capacities which make man pre-eminent. Then, in the second place, history, both in the form of tradition as well as actual written records, is dependent on human memory. In the words of a great historian:

Memory—the thing which binds one's life together, . . . which enables us to recognize ourselves of yesterday in ourselves of today, that reproduction of the dead past thrilling once more with life and passion, that magic glass that holds the unfading reflection of what exists no more—what a miracle it is! . . . The past exists in the memory as the future in the imagination. Consciousness is itself but the structure built upon this tenuous bridge between the two eternities



of the unknown, and history is the record of what has taken place therein. Memory, in short, reveals the world as a process, and so makes its data historical.<sup>26</sup>

History, then, consists, aside from basic structures through which the stream must flow and certain superhuman tendencies which will be given due consideration later, chiefly of the acts of man, of the records which he has left, and of the interpretations which the human mind has given to the human story. Thus man is the theme, the center, the chief actor, the interpreter, and also, it seems, the goal of this marvelous drama.

In this present chapter the attempt has been made to portray as truly as possible the nature and significance of man. Our conclusion is that human personality is in a real sense a clue to the Ultimate; and it would seem that at this point our venture might well be brought to a close in terms of a theistic explanation of history. But though much light has been cast on the nature of the Ultimate Reality in that it seems to be of the nature of mind, yet, even now, the time has not yet come to press any kind of solution as to the meaning of the whole.

History is the stage upon which man's capacities, all of them, both the higher and the lower, manifest themselves and come to fruition. Though the higher considered alone would certainly drive us to theism, yet the very existence of the lower nature of man alongside the higher must give us pause. Moreover, it is not enough to consider man's dual nature and his capacities in this general way as we have done in this present chapter. Both man's higher and his lower nature must be viewed as they manifest themselves and unfold and develop on the plane of history. In the

<sup>26</sup> James T. Shotwell, *An Introduction to the History of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 10. Used by permission.

next chapter due consideration will be given to the irrational and evil tendencies, together with any irrational tendencies within the basic structure of history, leaving the historical expressions of man's higher nature and signs of cosmic purpose upon the plane of history to a later chapter.

## Chapter 5

### THE THIRD CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS CONSIDERATION OF IRRATIONAL FACTORS

One reason why theology and philosophic idealism are in disrepute today is their failure to take the irrational and evil factors in human experience seriously enough. Much of the lamented plight of religious liberalism is due to this fact. The crying need of our day is for a liberalism and an idealism capable of looking the ugly realities of life in the face and somehow integrating them into a coherent world view. To attempt to deny them is impossible; they are stubborn facts which persist and defy all our endeavors to explain them away.

In this present chapter, then, an attempt will be made to look at the dark, stark, ugly realities of history. No philosophy of history worthy of the name can pass them by, for tragedy is one of the chief characteristics of the human story. There is no better cure for a cheap, superficial type of optimism than a serious study of history. Progress there has been, but only at a tremendous cost. The pages of history are literally soaked with blood, and civilizations are reared on pyramids of human skulls. The task that next awaits us, then, is to look at evil with open eyes. This is the purpose of the present chapter.

#### SAVAGERY AND INHUMAN CRUELTY

Many of the ancients, as we have seen, imagined that man was created rationally and morally perfect, and that he lived in a primitive state of bliss. Modern man knows

better. Science has opened our eyes. The truth is that man's ancestors were animals, who though more sly and cunning, were as brutal and ferocious as any other creatures that made their homes in the primeval forests. Even the first submen, from Pithecanthropus to the Neanderthal man, were little better than the beasts. They knew little or nothing about right and wrong. The law of the club, of brute might, was the law by which they lived, moderated only by spasmodic, instinctive, spontaneous marks of affection or of superstitious fear.

Even after this primitive, subhuman stage is passed and a crude type of barbaric culture is attained, the most inhuman cruelty is practiced toward those outside the tribe. Captives taken in the almost constant raids are sacrificed to the lust of the cruel, bloody gods which superstitious fear invented. Samuel, the prophet, hews Agag, the Amalekite king, to pieces before Yahweh,<sup>1</sup> and Joshua, commander in chief of the Hebrew forces, at the bidding of the same cruel, bloodthirsty god, destroys whole populations without a sting of conscience but with hideous religious and patriotic zeal.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, when the great civilizations appear, the Sumerian and the Egyptian, they rear their magnificence upon the whitened bones of the slaughtered and upon the miserable backs of the countless hordes of captives whom they enslaved. The pyramids of ancient Egypt were classed among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, yet these splendid and stupendous monuments were the product of the merciless heartbreaking labor of countless thousands of slaves.<sup>3</sup> Along with its blessings, civilization itself brought

<sup>1</sup> I Sam. 15:32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. 5:21-27.

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, pp. 308-9.

a new kind of tyranny: mass, planned, absolutistic, totalitarian tyranny. From the days of the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt down to Adolf Hitler and the Japanese war lords, civilizations have been plagued with totalitarianism. Even Roman democracy finally succumbed to it and cringed before its god emperors, the divine Caesars.

Moreover, great as the contributions of Rome have been, Lecky informs us that Rome rose to power upon the corpses of 1,100,000 men and he goes on to remind us:

Wrapt in the pale winding-sheet of general terms the greatest tragedies of history evoke no vivid images in our minds, and it is only by a great effort of genius that an historian can galvanize them into life. The irritation displayed by the captive of St. Helena in his bickerings with his gaoler affects most men more than the thought of the nameless thousands whom his insatiable egotism had hurried to the grave.<sup>4</sup>

As examples of inhuman cruelty and brutality, can anyone help but shudder at Alexander the Great's selling 30,000 Thebans, a whole city, into slavery, and worse yet, crucifying 2,000 Tyrians whose only crime was the patriotic defense of their native city? <sup>5</sup>

Even Gibbon is willing to admit, in spite of all his admiration for Rome, that "the perfect settlement of the Roman Empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine."<sup>6</sup> Again, Roman civilization, even as the Greek and the Egyptian before it, was built upon slavery; and while the more intellectual slaves in the cities fared well as a whole, the miserable slaves on the large plantations were driven to

<sup>4</sup> William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of European Morals* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1904), Vol. I, p. 133. Used by permission.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Random House, Inc., n.d.), Vol. I, p. 35. Used by permission.



and from the fields and treated like cattle.<sup>7</sup> However, one does not have to go to ancient times for illustrations of inhuman cruelty. American history affords us innumerable examples. Our heartless treatment of the Indian and the Negro, and, to top it all, our indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations during the last war, including the use of atomic bombs on two Japanese cities, are enough to make our very name a horror in the minds of countless millions of people throughout the world.

This brief study of man's inhumanity is not complete without some mention of the human monsters and destroyers who have appeared from time to time and watered the earth with blood. Among those of the ancient world, the line of Assyrian kings, beginning with Tiglathpileser III, take the prize. Toynbee lists the sack of Damascus in 732 B.C., Samaria in 722 B.C., Musasir in 714 B.C., Babylon in 689 B.C., Sidon in 677 B.C., Memphis in 671 B.C., Thebes in 663 B.C., Susa in 639 B.C., and adds "the loss and misery which Assyria afflicted on her neighbors is beyond calculation."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it must be remembered that the sack of each of these cities represents a human tale of woe which no tongue can adequately describe, especially so far as helpless women, children, and the aged were concerned.

Though many of the Roman emperors were able statesmen, among them we also find a brood of monsters. Five were especially notorious: the half-crazed tyrant Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and Caracalla.<sup>9</sup> Of Commodus, who is in many respects the worst, Gibbon says:

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World*, pp. 566-67.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), Vol. IV, p. 481. Used by permission.

<sup>9</sup> For these emperors see H. E. Barnes (ed.), *Ploetz' Manual of Universal History*, pp. 150-55.

But every sentiment of virtue and humanity was extinct in the mind of Commodus. Whilst he thus abandoned the reins of empire to . . . unworthy favorites, he valued nothing in sovereign power, except the unbounded license of indulging his sensual appetites. His hours were spent in a seraglio of three hundred beautiful women, and as many boys, of every rank, and of every province. . . . History has preserved a long list of consular senators sacrificed to his wanton suspicion. . . . He . . . shed with impunity the noblest blood of Rome.<sup>10</sup>

Even worse than these royal criminals, at least as far as their destructiveness is concerned, are the great conquerors: Genghis Khan, Attila, known as "the Scourge of God," Tamerlane, Napoleon, and Hitler. Conquerors such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar are omitted from this list because, on the whole, they probably did as much or perhaps even more good than evil. But so far as the five men mentioned above are concerned, the evil which they perpetrated looms so large that the good is largely forgotten. For the most part they are remembered with horror. Perhaps the worst of them all was Tamerlane, whose career of destruction Toynbee describes as follows:

To the vast majority of those to whom the name of Timur Lenk or Tamerlane means anything at all, it commemorates a militarist who perpetrated as many horrors in the span of twenty-four years as had been perpetrated in a century by a succession of Assyrian kings from Tiglath-Pileser III to Ashurbanipal inclusive.<sup>11</sup>

Here are some samples of Tamerlane's cruelties as given by Toynbee. He destroyed the city of Isfarā' in 1381, and in

<sup>10</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Random House, Inc., n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 81, 84. Used by permission.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), Vol. IV, p. 500. Used by permission.

1383, after building 2,000 prisoners into a living mound at Sabzawār, he bricked them over, and at Zirih he heaped 5,000 human heads into minarets. Worse yet, in 1387, at Isfahān, he massacred 70,000, piling their heads into minarets; in 1393 he massacred 100,000 prisoners at Delhi; in 1400 he buried alive 4,000 of the garrison of Christian soldiers at Sivas after they had surrendered; and most monstrous of all, in 1400 and 1401, he built twenty towers of human skulls in Syria. No wonder that Toynbee speaks of "the crack-brained megalomania of the homicidal madman whose one idea is to impress the imagination of Mankind with a sense of his military power by the hideous abuse of it."<sup>12</sup> Monsters such as this constitute a real problem for theists, especially for those who believe in an omnipotent God who is also loving. Hitler in our own day shook the faith of many believers.

Finally, there are the almost constant wars which have plagued mankind from the very dawn of history. The facts show that the natural and normal condition of mankind, thus far at least, has not been a state of peace, as some may think, but a state of war. During ancient times the various states and nations were almost constantly at war. In fact, till modern times, war was taken for granted and expected as an event whose coming was as natural and inevitable as the periodic return of bad weather. It was the game of kings. Kings and nobles engaged in it as a kind of sport. There are many men, in fact, who delight in war, and it has a certain psychological attraction even for those who fear it. Like many forms of evil, it fascinates, and especially is this true when militarists succeed in leading the ordinary citizen to associate war with flashing uniforms, martial music, parades, and the sentiment of patriotism.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Used by permission.

One of the most hopeful signs during modern times has been the growth of the peace movement. More and more people in every country are not only beginning to see that war is bad, but they are also beginning to see that war is not necessarily inevitable and they are organizing for peace. Nevertheless the modern record is very bad. From 1480 to 1941 there have been no less than 278 wars, twenty-four of which have occurred during the twentieth century. Again, during the twentieth century there have been no less than 2,700 battles.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, while modern wars may not last as long as some which took place during ancient and medieval times, yet, far worse, they tend to spread all over the world, to embrace the whole populations of the nations in titanic struggles, and to be far more destructive because of our modern lethal weapons. This greater destructiveness is well illustrated by World War II, which resulted in over twenty-two million killed, over thirty-four million wounded,<sup>14</sup> and the devastation of most of Europe. Worse yet, another war will involve the use of atomic and bacteriological weapons and will certainly destroy civilization if not mankind.

It is doubtful whether there is anything more evil than war, especially modern war. Figures relative to the number slain and wounded and the general destruction tell but half the story. The moral and spiritual costs are even greater. Aside from the unspeakable physical suffering, there is the loss of character. There is a tendency to throw off all the habits and restraints which civilization has so laboriously built up during the last six thousand years. War is a reversion to the primitive, a return to the jungle and the animal.

<sup>13</sup> For all figures relative to wars and battles, see Q. Wright, *A Study of War*, Vol. II, pp. 686-89.

<sup>14</sup> For figures relative to casualties in World War II, see *The World Almanac*, 1949, pp. 317, 326.

War is devolution, not evolution. The human cost of this diabolical institution during the last six thousand years is immeasurable, entirely beyond the power of the imagination to picture or the mind of man to conceive. In short, in this terrible phenomenon we have an epitome of the savage and unspeakable cruelty present, as a factor to be reckoned with, in human history thus far.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE AND THE CONSEQUENT WASTE

On the surface, when in her best moods, Nature appears beautiful, peaceful, and serene. Yet all the while a brutal struggle for survival is going on within the plant and animal kingdoms. This struggle results from the fact, which Malthus observed even before Darwin, that every species tends to produce more offspring than the food supply can sustain. Thus Lull has estimated that a single oyster may produce 60,000,000 eggs, and that if all these hatched and survived and multiplied at the same rate, that by the time there would be great-great-grandchildren they would number 66,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000, and their total shells would form a mass no less than eight times the size of the earth.<sup>15</sup> From this tremendous production it is obvious that a keen competition for food exists, and that there is a savage and relentless struggle, not only with the environment but also with one another, for there are no greater cannibals than oysters. As a final result, a few of the strongest survive while the vast majority perish.

Man certainly does not reproduce as fast as the oyster nor as fast as most other species. He is a relatively slow breeder. So far as man is concerned, as over against the oyster and most other species, the aim seems to be rather a better type

<sup>15</sup> R. S. Lull, *Organic Evolution*, p. 120.



of individual than a mere increase in numbers. Yet one cannot but be impressed by the fact that throughout history man has tended to increase faster than the food supply would allow. In fact, one of the most depressing and discouraging factors in history is this vast spawning of the human race, seemingly without rhyme or reason and without any concern for the individuals. This has been true particularly in the large area between European Russia and China, this immense breeding ground of nomads, especially of races such as the Huns and Mongols. From this region, and as a result of these vast spawnings and the consequent lack of adequate sustenance, have come those great periodic eruptions of crude barbarians which up to modern times have proved the greatest threat to civilization. It is interesting to note that three of the world's worst destroyers have come from this part of the world, namely, Attila the Hun, and the Mongols Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.

Today, while there is little danger from the raids of nomadic barbarians from without, yet there is great danger from the barbarians from within. For while man has increased his food supply immeasurably, still this vast spawning of the human race continues, especially in countries such as India, China, and Japan, at a rate that makes it difficult within the near future to provide even the bare necessities of life. This gives dictators their opportunity to rise to power, whether they be fascist or communist. Who can doubt but that the pressure of population, and the consequent need for Lebensraum, operated as a contributing cause in the rise of nazism and fascism, and consequently in the coming of World War II? War, of course, is not the answer to the population problem, but if wise measures are not taken to check the birth rate, on the one hand, and to increase the food supply, on the other, the pressure of popu-

lation will certainly continue and may become a contributing cause to a possible third world war. Already in his day Charles Darwin was warning that within twenty-five years the birth rate had doubled, and that if this increase continued at the same pace, in less than a thousand years there would not be standing room on the earth.<sup>16</sup> Many voices are issuing similar warnings today.

As one contemplates history, there is a real danger of being overwhelmed by the spectacle of the brutal struggle for existence and the vast, immeasurable waste of human material. Not only countless numbers of animal species but also whole races of men have likewise vanished. One is not inclined to shed tears over such submen as Pithecanthropus, the Peking man, the Heidelberg man, the Piltdown man, and the Neanderthal man, but nevertheless the fact remains that here were experiments carried to a remarkably high level, relative to the rest of the animal kingdom, and yet in the end they failed miserably. Worse yet, there was the promising Cro-Magnon race, which was certainly truly human. Among them were some of the finest examples of physical fitness and beauty of form which the earth has seen. Moreover, some of them had unusual artistic and perhaps also religious capacity. Yet in spite of all this, as a race capable of taking the lead, of forming the spearhead of advance toward civilization, they vanished, and civilization had to wait for thousands of years. This is one of the great tragedies of history.

Finally, most of the civilizations that have appeared upon earth have perished. Toynbee lists twenty-one major civilizations: the Egyptian, the Andean, the Sinic, the Minoan, the Sumeric, the Mayan, the Yucatec, the Mexic, the Hittite, the Syriac, the Babylonian, the Iranian, the Arabic, the

<sup>16</sup> C. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p. 74.

Far Eastern (the Main Body), the Far Eastern (the Japanese Offshoot), the Indic, the Hindu, the Hellenic, the Orthodox Christian (the Main Body), the Orthodox Christian (the Russian Offshoot), and the Western; and five arrested civilizations, namely, the Polynesian, the Eskimo, the Nomadic, the 'Osmanlis, and the Spartan. Of these twenty-six civilizations which have bloomed, only ten are left today, and of these ten, nine are sick unto death, and only one, our Western, is still creative.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Toynbee has shown that two factors are largely responsible for the destruction of civilizations, namely, war and the class struggle. He also points out that while in the past these two deadly forces acting in conjunction were able to kill civilizations without being able to kill the possibility of civilization itself, today, with our deadly weapons, the very possibility of civilizations itself may be destroyed. If allowed to operate as in the past, Toynbee holds that war and class struggle might even annihilate the human race.<sup>18</sup>

When one thus reads history realistically, one cannot but be impressed by the fact of the brutal human struggle that has been going on for ages and the consequent monstrous waste. There seem to be brutal forces at work in history which set man not only against nature and against the animal kingdom but against his fellows as well. In fact, civilizations themselves, thus far at least, have arisen only after a long prelude of violence and at tremendous human cost. This constitutes a stupendous problem for theists, and especially for those who believe that God is both loving and omnipotent.

<sup>17</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 1-2. See also the excellent table of these civilizations in D. C. Somervell's abridgment of Toynbee's famous work, Table V, following p. 565.

<sup>18</sup> Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 23-25.

## PERVERSIONS AND CORRUPTIONS

In the chapter on man, mention was made of the fact that the worst evils come from man's perversion of his greatest endowments and gifts. History well illustrates this fact. Among man's greatest endowments is sex. Not only is it the means employed for the reproduction of human life, but it is also the basis of the home, which constitutes the very foundation stone of human society and of all culture and civilization. Moreover, from sex have come the tenderest and finest sentiments of lover and beloved and of parent and child. It has also inspired much of the most beautiful poetry, music, and song which has gladdened the world. Yet how often it has been perverted and made a monstrosity! There is no better illustration of this fact in all human history than the emperor Commodus. Leaving an empire to its fate, this brute spent his time seducing beautiful women and boys and using violence where the wiles of seduction proved ineffective.<sup>19</sup> Another example is the Moslem Mohammed II, whose unnatural lust at times stopped at nothing.<sup>20</sup> A friend, a former chaplain with our occupation forces in Germany, informs me that the conduct of our troops furnishes the best modern example of the excesses of unrestrained human lust. Moreover, the history of prostitution well epitomizes man's hideous perversion of one of his greatest capacities.

All thinkers except anarchists recognize the value and importance of man's capacity for political organization and government. It has, when at its best, functioned as an instrument of order, justice, and peace; but it has also given

<sup>19</sup> Gibbon, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 774-75.

men the opportunity to lord it over their fellows and to oppress them without mercy. Closely related to this capacity for political organization is the sentiment of patriotism. Without it there would not be enough social cohesion to make nations and civilizations possible, and it has led men to some of the greatest feats of unselfish service and devotion. Next to the martyrs of religion and humanitarianism stand the martyrs of patriotism. Yet how often it has been perverted and how many great evils it has caused! The demagogue, the militarist, and the would-be dictator appeal to this sentiment and often ride to power with disastrous results. Hitler is an outstanding modern example.

Finally, there is religion. At its highest and best it has been mankind's greatest boon. From it have flowed the noblest principles, sentiments, attitudes, and ideals of man, and often also the power and dynamic for their realization. Moreover, no civilization has yet arisen and endured for any length of time without a religious basis, and it seems that when religion decays men lose their restraint; they become materialistic and opportunistic, ideals lose their power, and society falls apart.

Yet great as its benefits are, religion is by no means an unmixed blessing. Low, perverted forms have been more prevalent than the higher forms. In the ancient temples religion fostered the twin evils of human sacrifice and prostitution. Again, religion has often been the foe of progress. Jesus loved truth, but many of his followers have preferred ignorance. It is no credit to religion that a Christian emperor closed the university of Athens in A.D. 529, that fanatical monks burned libraries and temples, and that religion, inspired by a dogmatic obscurantism, resisted science for so long. Worse yet, men even succeeded in so watering down the teachings of Jesus that for centuries Christianity



existed as little more than a kind of superior paganism. It was this that made it easy for our barbarous pagan ancestors to accept it with little change of heart and life, but the final result was such a corruption of the church itself that the Reformation became necessary if Christianity was to survive. Moreover, it must also be said that even today the Christianity of most professing Christians does not go very deep. Most of them are still nationalists at heart. Caesar is still their real God, and in times of stress they will elect Caesar and crucify Christ.

But the darkest phase of religious history is to be found in the religious wars and persecutions. The Crusades were bloody struggles between Moslems and Christians. Basically, the Thirty Years' War was a terrible struggle between the followers of the humble Nazarene. Certainly it was one of the bloodiest and most destructive wars ever fought on European soil. While the causes were in part political, yet there is no doubt that it was inspired largely by religious antagonisms existing between the two hostile camps of Catholics and Protestants.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the sayings of Jesus have often been perverted and used for evil. He has often been dressed in khaki, and many a sword has been blessed in his name. Both Catholics and Protestants are guilty of murdering their brethren in his name and with a clear conscience. To this day there are Jews who shrink with horror at the name of Jesus, remembering how mobs attacked, pillaged, and killed them with that name on their lips.

Likewise, religion has often been used as a cloak, and by the powerful as a means for keeping the masses in subjection in order to make their exploitation easier. Some of the ancient priestly hierarchies, such as those of Sumeria

<sup>21</sup> See Wright, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 723-24; and W. O. Ault, *Europe in Modern Times*, pp. 142-49.

and Egypt, seem to have been expert at this. It is well known that in Russia it was a corrupt, reactionary church, working hand in hand with an autocratic and oppressive state, that helped to produce the Communist Revolution, and to lead Marxists to regard all religion as nothing but an opiate.<sup>22</sup> Even American business is expert at times in disguising a ruthless capitalism in religious garb. In fact, next to the prevention of war, the American church has no greater responsibility than to dissociate itself from a decaying capitalism which has so long kept Christianity in bondage and muzzled its prophets. Finally, history teems with illustrations of how a low, ignorant, superstitious religion has cursed men with abnormal fears, incited them to deeds of cruelty and violence, and turned many of them into mental wrecks.

To the idealist, surveying the human scene from the vantage point of history, nothing appears more devilish than these strange perversions and corruptions of man's greatest creative powers. Yet this has been the story, and the philosopher dare not neglect them just because they are ugly. No philosophy of history is complete without them.

#### THE APPARENT WEAKNESS OF IDEALS AND THE TRAGIC FATE OF IDEALISTS

Another fact which must be given serious consideration is the apparent weakness of ideals as forces for good in human history and the tragic fate of idealists. Ideals by their very nature are immaterial and intangible as compared with material things and forces. As a result, they appear unreal to

<sup>22</sup> In the case of Marx himself, it was the German church, with its lack of social vision, which caused him to look upon religion as an opiate. As a matter of fact, he expected the Communist Revolution to begin in Germany rather than in Russia.

many. Worse yet, the only really determining factors in history, on the surface at least, seem to be the materialistic, often in the form of naked, brute force and still more often in the form of power politics based on force.

Ages ago, when the great dinosaurs reigned supreme for over a hundred million years, there was no question but that brute strength was the determining factor. These gigantic beasts ruled the earth. Likewise, in the case of the various types of submen, while intelligence began to play a larger part and also a kind of affection similar to that which animals show, there still was no sign of conscious morality. It was with Cro-Magnon man, however, that morality had its first faint beginnings some 25,000 years ago. Along with a consciousness of something resembling moral sentiment, he probably had certain customs and taboos embodying a few crude, simple rules, of which the sorcerer or medicine man, the prototype of the prophet and of the priest, was the custodian.<sup>23</sup>

We now know that moral idealism in the modern sense is hardly six thousand years old, flowering in the first great civilization, the Sumerian, and fruiting in the Egyptian.<sup>24</sup> For only a very small fraction of the time of man's life on earth, then, has there been any real consciousness of ideals. Moreover, even after man becomes morally conscious, for most men morality is little more than a convention. The prophet is not tolerated. As civilization developed, the moral appeal, of course, gained prestige, but the scope was largely confined to the immediate social and political group. Even to this day, after six thousand years, morality for the

<sup>23</sup> For an interesting discussion of Cro-Magnon morality see L. du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, pp. 124-29.

<sup>24</sup> For Sumerian morality see C. L. Wooley, *The Sumerians*, pp. 90-129; also S. Eddy, *God in History*, pp. 45-57; and for the Egyptian see J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*.

masses is still largely nationalistic. Thus, even in modern civilization, ideals often seem fragile and powerless and unreal in contrast to physical force, especially military power. The ancient savage prevailed by means of his club; his younger brother, the modern imperialistic statesman, by means of power politics based upon large military establishments. So far as the actual course of history is concerned, there is much truth in Machiavelli. Most of man's politics, thus far, has been *Realpolitik*, altogether too Machiavellian, largely free from ideals though often marching under idealistic slogans.

Even more discouraging has been the tragic fate of so many idealists and reformers. Ikhnaton, the world's first monotheist, the great reforming king of Egypt, was hated by the priestly oligarchy during his lifetime, and after his death his work was almost altogether undone by the zealous reactionaries. In fact, he was never referred to afterwards except as "the criminal of Akhetaton."<sup>25</sup> Zoroaster was killed in battle. Amos was chased out of town. Jeremiah narrowly escaped death many times and was forced to spend his last years in a foreign land after seeing the city that he loved, and tried to save, razed to the ground and its inhabitants marched off as captives to cruel Babylon. Confucius spent his last days wandering, homeless, and died of a broken heart, convinced that his life was a failure. Socrates was tried and condemned to drink the hemlock. Jesus Christ was crucified upon a Roman cross like a common criminal, and Paul was beheaded. Savonarola and John Huss were burned at the stake.

Many political reformers suffered similar fates. While the old tyrant and murderer of the prophets, Manasseh,

<sup>25</sup> James Henry Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 307. Used by permission.

ruled for fifty-five years, the good king, Josiah, died a tragic death while in the flower of manhood.

Jeremiah also chanted a dirge for Josiah and all the singing men and women speak of Josiah in their chants down to this day; and they made them a custom in Israel; and behold, they are written in the Lamentations.<sup>26</sup>

Julius Caesar was no saint, yet he was a statesman of the first magnitude and began real reforms at Rome, only to be struck down by the treacherous daggers of his enemies. Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius were two of the noblest men that ever sat upon a throne, and the empire flourished under their wise sway, but their successor was none other than the vile Commodus, perhaps the most dissolute man who ever ruled in any land. As a result, their good work was largely lost as the empire began to take the fatal plunge toward destruction. Again, the noble and virtuous Majorian tried to restore the Byzantine realm and to redeem it from corruption, but after many real successes he became the victim of a seditious plot, was forced to resign, and his beneficent endeavors ended in total failure.<sup>27</sup> Abraham Lincoln and Gandhi were assassinated. Strange indeed seem the ways of Providence or, as some would say, of Fate.

#### THE SLOWNESS OF EVOLUTION AND PROGRESS, AND THE ULTIMATE DOOM

Closely related to what has already been said is the fact of the extreme slowness of evolution and progress. The stars were formed perhaps ten billion years ago, and the earth not until probably seven or eight billion years later. Unless there were successful experiments on other planets

<sup>26</sup> II Chron. 35:25.

<sup>27</sup> For this great, yet little known ruler, see Gibbon, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 312-19.



during these seven or eight billion years, nothing existed except blazing suns swinging blindly in their orbits. In fact, for at least a billion years the earth was lifeless. Then, for countless millions of years, during the Archeozoic period, only the lowest possible forms of life existed. The Archeozoic was followed by the Proterozoic and the Paleozoic, the ages of fishes and amphibians, which lasted about three hundred and sixty million years. These in turn gave way to the Mesozoic, the age of reptiles, when the great dinosaurs ruled the earth for over a hundred million years. Finally, there came the Cenozoic, the age of mammals, which began over fifty million years ago,<sup>28</sup> and only 500,000 years ago did the first submen appear, and the first true man about 475,000 years later, that is, about 25,000 years ago. Evolution has been very slow indeed!

Likewise, man's economic, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual progress has been very slow and at a tremendous cost. There is something irrational, stubborn, defiant in human nature that refuses to follow the higher light. Only after Confucius had been long dead did the Chinese see his true worth, and then in a perverted fashion. The Jews had to suffer severely before they began to honor the Prophets, and even then more with their lips than with their hearts. The cry for justice was first heard in ancient Sumeria and Egypt some five or six thousand years ago, and given classic expression by Amos over twenty-seven hundred years ago, but it took communism, this crude, terrible Hebrew-Christian heresy, to force the full implication of justice upon the minds and hearts of men. In spite of all this many are as blind and stubborn and as defiant as ever. Jesus proclaimed the Golden Rule and human brotherhood nearly two thou-

<sup>28</sup> The probable duration of these ages is based upon du Noüy's table. See *op. cit.*, the Table following p. xix.

sand years ago, yet except among small groups it has had little real effect. Again, most of the greatest teachers of mankind hated war and loved peace, yet how very slow has been the will to peace. One of the most discouraging things about men is how much they are willing to sacrifice for war and how little for peace. The old gods of their fathers still cast their spell upon them.

Finally, there is the prospect of the ultimate doom. The scientists are fairly well agreed that, however long the earth may endure, some day the sun's heat will be so greatly diminished that life will no longer be possible upon this planet. So far as this earth is concerned, a dark cloud hangs low upon the far horizon. However magnificent the heights which it may reach, someday this human drama will come to its last act, the most tragic of them all. Someday the curtain will go down forever.

Physics tells the same story as astronomy. For, independently of all astronomical considerations, the general physical principle known as the second law of thermodynamics predicts that there can be but one end to the universe—a "heat-death" in which the total energy of the universe is uniformly distributed, and all the substance of the universe is at the same temperature. This temperature will be so low as to make life impossible. It matters little by what particular road this final stage is reached; all roads lead to Rome, and the end of the journey cannot be other than universal death.<sup>29</sup>

### METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this present chapter our concern has been with irrational or evil factors in history. No realistic student of history can possibly ignore them, and least of all the philoso-

<sup>29</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 15. Used by permission.

pher. Savagery and inhuman cruelty, the struggle for existence and the appalling waste, perversion and corruption, the apparent weakness of ideals and the tragic fate of idealists, together with the slowness of evolution and progress—these are all outstanding characteristics of the human story which find expression and illustration in every chapter. Consequently it would seem that these factors also must have real metaphysical implications, since history seems to be a manifestation of that which is ultimate and not mere appearance only. There must be something in the very nature of the ultimate which makes for the continual appearance of these irrational factors in history.

Now if the irrational or evil factors were the only factors in nature and in history, then some form of naturalistic fatalism, or at best the pessimistic fatalism of Schopenhauer, would be the result; but fortunately these are by no means the only factors. In the discussion of man as a clue, along with a lower nature, we also discovered that he has a higher nature which always and everywhere for some six thousand or more years has stood defiantly over against the irrational and the evil. As in the present chapter, due consideration was given to the expressions of man's lower nature upon the stage of history, together with certain seemingly irrational natural necessities which condition historical processes, so it now behooves us likewise to observe the development of man's higher life upon this same stage of history, along with such other signs of cosmic purpose as may be revealed in the structure and basic tendencies of the historical process as a whole. This shall be our task in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### THE FOURTH CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS CONSIDERATION OF SIGNS OF PURPOSE

The chief fault of many theistic thinkers, as we have seen, is failure to give due consideration to the irrational, brute facts of life. As a result, theism appears unrealistic to many people today. But while the theist's chief fault has been the failure to face and see the full implications of evil, the atheist's has been just the opposite. Few if any atheists have given due consideration to the teleological facts, the signs of purpose. In fact, most modern skeptics are confirmed in their unbelief. They take it for granted that theism is so untenable as not to require refutation or even a fair examination. Consequently they make little effort to deal with the problem of history thoroughly and synoptically. Beneath their pretension at complete objectivity, one can often detect a dogmatism that would put a medieval theologian to shame.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, objectivity, to many of them, means a rigid adherence to a preconceived naturalistic philosophy. Certainly the philosopher, like the scientist, has a right to a preliminary hypothesis, but he has no right to make a Procrustean bed out of it. In short, he must hold it tentatively until he has shown that it is the most adequate in the light of all the significant and relevant facts.

<sup>1</sup> Roy Wood Sellars comes nearest to a real grappling with the teleological facts, but even he hardly gives them the full consideration which they deserve. See, for example, how superficially he dismisses the arguments from order and design in his *Principles and Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 273, 481; and how lightly he dispenses with God in his *Philosophy of Physical Realism*, pp. 15, 236.

In Chapter 3, and even more in Chapter 4, facts have been presented which should give every dogmatic atheist pause. It remains in the present chapter to set forth more clearly the teleological factors in history, both as manifested in the part that man's creative capacities have played in shaping events and the course of history, and also in the basic underlying structure and the superhuman trends which history as a whole seems to manifest.

#### THE CREATIVE ADVANCE TOWARD UNITY AND ORDER

According to the old Christian view, the universe, and all that is in it, was created in six days only about six thousand years ago. To see history in its true perspective, the modern thinker must go back over ten billion years ago before the stars came into existence. What the state of affairs then was no one knows; but all cosmogonies are fairly well agreed that before the formation of the stars, primeval chaos reigned. This primeval chaos, perhaps the wildest imaginable, might well have continued forever. The striking thing is that it came to an end. There came a time when chaos gave way to what some astronomers call a primitive nebula.<sup>2</sup> Then some ten billion years ago something marvelous began to take place. Out of this vast swirling mass of nebulous energy, stars and galaxies began to form with some measure of order.<sup>3</sup>

Again, this state of affairs might have continued forever, but it likewise came to an end, giving way to something more promising. In one remote corner at least, and perhaps

<sup>2</sup> See J. Jeans, *The Universe Around Us*, pp. 216-23; and *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. VIII, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. VIII, p. 36; Jeans, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-26.



in other remote corners as well, something new, wonderful, momentous began to take place. Ages ago, the astronomers tell us, the heavens put on the grandest show, the most dazzling spectacle, beyond the ability of the human imagination to picture. The two giant actors in this marvelous drama were our sun and another star perhaps equally large. This great star came near enough to our sun to draw from it vast masses of flaming matter which began to whirl at a tremendous speed, thus forming great round balls of molten matter. In this manner our earth and other planets were formed, and they began their orderly march around the sun as they are doing today and as they have done for at least two billion years.<sup>4</sup>

That this was apparently not the result of pure chance or accident seems evident from two interesting facts. First, stars are so far apart that it is only very rarely indeed that two of them approach near enough to pull matter out of each other. "They travel," says Sir James Jeans, "through a universe so spacious that it is an event of almost unimaginable rarity for a star to come anywhere near to another star."<sup>5</sup> Eddington thinks "that perhaps not one in a hundred millions of stars can have undergone this experience in the right stage and conditions to result in the formation of a system of planets."<sup>6</sup> It appears that the particular

<sup>4</sup> Not all authorities are agreed as to details. The above is based on a comparative study of the following: Jeans, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-48; Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, pp. 1-2; R. T. Chamberlin, "The Origin and Early Stages of the Earth," in H. H. Newman (ed.), *The Nature of the World and of Man*, pp. 33-41; and *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. VIII, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 1. Used by permission.

<sup>6</sup> A. S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 177. Used by permission.

event under consideration involves purpose; it may have been planned. Then, in the second place, it hardly seems possible that these swirling masses of matter should take shape and form and begin their orderly march around the sun as the result of blind chance or mere accident. That this whole affair may have been planned gains further support from the fact that this orderly march of the earth around the sun constitutes not only a forecast but also the condition of greater things to come.

Let us continue the earth's strange story. As time went on, the earth became more orderly in its movements, and more than that, it began to cool and to grow by receiving vast amounts of extraneous matter which fell upon it out of the mysterious realms of space. It also began gathering an atmosphere. Originally, all the water seems to have been in the form of steam, but as the earth cooled, the steam began to condense and fall as rain, sinking into the ground and thus making possible the springs, brooks, and rivers. Moreover, as the steam continued to condense, oceans and seas began to form, but here and there and yonder the high dry ground stood out above the threatening waters.<sup>7</sup>

All this appears like the working out of a plan, a preparation for still more important things to come, for they are possible only as just such changes take place to bring about the right conditions. These processes, in fact, set the stage for the greatest event thus far—the coming of life, those first primitive cells. Here we encounter a double miracle. These first cells constituted something altogether new and different as to structure. There was nothing in all the world comparable to them. Even more wonderful was the miracle of life, for here, and for the first time, we find something

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is based largely on Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, in Newman, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-52.

which is not material, but which uses matter for its own purposes. Along with this, there is a sensitivity and a strange power of response which denotes a strange awareness.

Again, the process does not stop here. It even assumes the appearance of a great experiment. Many strange forms of life appear. The first primitive cells give way to many-celled creatures in the form of worms and crustaceans, these in turn to giant fishes and amphibians, and these to gigantic reptiles, dinosaurs, tortoises, and crocodiles. Thus it appears that having failed to achieve its end by means of the smaller organisms, nature next tried brute strength and gigantic size. In fact, either through hope or necessity or both, this experiment lasted for nearly half a billion years.

Apparently disappointed again, nature produced another peculiar creature, the mammal. At first it was very insignificant indeed.

During the whole age of reptiles, about 100 million years, the mammals vegetated. They were small aplacental animals, a few inches long, resembling the marsupials of our day. Some of them existed on insects, others were carnivorous, and still others, rodents. The enormous dinosaurs, weighing up to eighty tons, could crush dozens of them under foot without even being aware of it.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless the future belonged to these tiny beasts because they possessed greater brains and also better means of reproduction and of temperature control.

Again the process does not end, for from these tiny animals, after millions of years, there arises one who is destined to master the earth and who, in fact, seems to be the end and goal of the whole process. At any rate, when man finally arrives nature seems to cease experimenting with new

<sup>8</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 76. Used by permission.

forms and to concentrate on him.<sup>9</sup> Evolution apparently stops on the purely physical level only to proceed on the higher mental, moral, and spiritual plane.

Thus when the fulness of time had come, man steps upon the stage as the central theme and grand climax of the drama. For a time, indeed, certain fierce beasts, with whose warring cries the air resounded, disputed the earth with him; but the time came when these creatures, proving their unfitness to live, went the way of the dinosaur, and little, seemingly weak man takes the center of the stage. As a result, history becomes something more than the story of natural processes and the lowly unreflective behavior of animals. Natural history gives way to that most significant of all histories, human history. In other words, history begins in earnest, in the most real sense of the word. Leaving the animal kingdom aside, it concerns itself with man, who in spite of obvious frailties, monstrous stupidities, and hideous sins seems strangely impelled by a Power greater and other than himself to climb the difficult, dizzy, yet alluring heights of mental, moral, and spiritual achievement.

Man finds it impossible to dwell in solitude. He finds a mate, and together they make a home and rear a family.

<sup>9</sup> Some may question the idea that man is the goal of evolution on the ground that since he has been in existence for only a short time, relatively, it is too soon to judge. A fourfold answer may be given to this objection. First, the idea that man is the goal is based on the best knowledge that we have; while not an absolute certainty, it is at least a probable certainty. Second, man alone has the capacity to look at the process as it has proceeded through billions of years; and from this long perspective it does seem to be heading toward a goal—toward man and the development of his higher capacities. The best recent exposition of this view is du Noüy's *Human Destiny*. Third, it is not likely that another creature capable of supplanting man will arise. Evolution seems to be continuing through him alone. If man perishes from the earth any time soon, he will be self-slain; but this is not inevitable. Fourth, no matter how short its past, there is a long future possible for the human race.

Families grow into clans, clans into tribes, tribes into nations, nations into empires. These empires, in spite of their injustices, attain world significance and produce great cultures. They persist for a time and then perish and vanish, not because of Fate but because of inner corruption and strife, militarism, and the failure to cope successfully with their environment and with their social and political problems. Yet even though their bodies die, their souls, that is their cultures, live on. Thus when a great empire falls after a period of disintegration and decay, there is a new advance. Fired by the soul of the old empire, another nation or nations take up the torch.<sup>10</sup>

It is remarkable how far back the roots of our Western civilization go and to how many nations and races we are indebted. Witness our indebtedness to the Greeks for their achievements in science, philosophy, art, and education; to the Romans for their achievements in law and the art of government; to the Phoenicians, that tiny but hardy seafaring folk, for the priceless gift of the alphabet; and to the Hebrews, that little, weak, and often despised people, for the priceless heritage of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Moreover, behind these nations and the civilizations which they represent lie the older Egyptian and Sumerian cultures, the two oldest fully developed civilizations known to history. Finally, behind these lie the crude cultures and the mighty achievements of our primitive ancestors. We are indeed heirs of the ages.

This great process, with its trend toward unity and world order, does not end with nations. It is superindividual,

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to observe that even such apparently dead civilizations as those of the Incas and Aztecs are beginning to exert some influence. See A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 220-22. Few values are completely lost. Even the Mayan civilization was not wholly lost. See Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IV, p. 108.



supertribal, supernational, superhuman. For a time it makes use of individuals, nations, empires, that is, so far and so long as they seem to be in line with the universal goal. It is capable, however, of thrusting them aside when they become corrupt, decadent, and no longer creative, and having cast aside an old corrupt civilization, it begins elsewhere. Thus for a time it was able to operate through the Greeks, but when they proved their inability to promote unity, even among themselves, it forsook them for the Romans. Through the Romans it succeeded marvelously for many centuries. Indeed, Gibbon looks upon the period from A.D. 98 to 180, when five of the ablest emperors ruled, as one of the greatest and perhaps the most peaceful and happiest eras in all human history.<sup>11</sup> Then when Rome, intoxicated by the wine of power, became corrupt and oppressive, it decayed and fell, but that was not the end of Roman civilization, or more correctly, the Graeco-Roman civilization. Out of its ruins blossomed three new civilizations: the Eastern Orthodox, the Islamic, and our Western. Proving too oppressive, the first two, after a period of splendid flowering and promise, declined. Today the processes of history are operating tremendously through the Western, the only one which is still vigorous and creative. Other civilizations, however, still have influence and probably will awaken to new life in the near future.<sup>12</sup>

As one looks across the last six thousand years from the beginnings of the first civilizations, it seems that the goal toward which the processes of history are relentlessly moving is world unity, world order, and, as a result, peace, justice, and freedom. The process began heading toward this

<sup>11</sup> E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> As to the possibilities of the various civilizations, see Toynbee, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 1-4; also his *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 220-22.

goal long ago, even before the first civilizations appeared. First, the family was established and served to promote law and order and peace among brothers, next the clan among families, the tribe among clans, the nation with its king or parliament among tribes and sections, and today a possible world government which alone can promote law and order and a lasting peace among nations. In fact, the choice which mankind confronts today is one world or none. Man has the choice of unity and order with peace and justice, or extinction. Thus he is being forced toward the goal even against his will. He may, of course, choose extinction through external war and internal strife. However, there is still hope that this superhuman world process, operating from without, together with his rational and moral capacities, operating from within, may prove strong enough to build a world worthy of mankind.

When one takes the long view, not only across six thousand years but across ten billion years, one cannot rid oneself of the suspicion that something great and wonderful, in terms of a superhuman plan and purpose, is being achieved on this grain of sand amid the vast seas of space. First, the primitive chaos, then the giant nebula, next the stars with some semblance of order, and then the dramatic birth of the earth. The earth in turn goes through various stages, making possible the advent of life, and after many interesting experiments, man appears. Man is given the creative capacity and forced to exercise it in the invention of the family, the clan, the tribe, the nation, the empire, and today a possible world government, each in its turn serving to promote unity, order, justice, and peace over wider and wider areas. It looks like the unfolding of a great plan, and if a plan, then there must be a Master Mind and Will, a God. There are no plans without minds, and the greater

the plan, the greater the mind. Again, history looks like a great Drama, and if it is a Drama, it requires a Dramatist.

Moreover, it looks like a plan which has by no means completely unfolded, and like a drama which is still in the first or second act with many more and greater acts to follow. Unless man deliberately commits suicide, the race has a long, noble, and promising future ahead.

As inhabitants of a civilised earth, we are living at the very beginning of time. We have come into being in the fresh glory of the dawn, and a day of almost unthinkable length stretches before us with unimaginable opportunities for accomplishment. Our descendants of far-off ages, looking down this long vista of time from the other end, will see our present age as the misty morning of the world's history; they will see our contemporaries of to-day as dim heroic figures who fought their way through jungles of ignorance, error and superstition to discover truth, to learn how to harness the forces of nature, and to make a world worthy for mankind to live in. We are still too much engulfed in the greyness of the morning mists to be able to imagine, even vaguely, how this world of ours will appear to those who will come after us and see it in the full light of day.<sup>13</sup>

### THE INCREASE AND GROWTH OF VALUES

Having seen that viewed as a whole the world process and the processes of human history seem to be driving toward unity, world order, and peace, together with freedom and justice, it now behooves us to consider a very closely related trend of the same great Drama, namely, the increase, development, and growth of values. In fact, in so far as unity and world order make peace and justice possible, we have already caught a glimpse of this value-producing process.

<sup>13</sup> Sir James Jeans, *The Universe Around Us* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1944), p. 289. Used by permission.

It is left to us now, however, to study it more closely and to consider the whole range of values. For if it can be shown that history is essentially a process for the growth of values or in which values not only appear but actually develop and increase, then it seems evident that the Mind and Will which initiated and sustains and guides the process is really benevolent.

Now it is obvious that there was a time when no values whatever existed, that is before the advent of life; for value experience is possible only for sentient beings. It is also obvious that the first value experience was of a very low order indeed, since the first living things must have been the very simplest possible. At any rate, as the various orders of living things developed and increased in complexity and in capacity, there came a commensurate increase in values. It seems reasonable, then, to suppose that the earliest worms had a greater capacity for values than the first crude, microscopic organisms; the crustaceans and the fishes, than the worms; the reptiles, than the fishes; the mammals, than the reptiles; and the first submen, far greater than all the other forms of life which had come into existence. Thus even during the vast ages prior to the rise of modern man, there are real and indisputable signs of a value-producing process at work which seems to be interested in developing beings capable not only of more values but also of higher values.

Again, it is obvious that in comparison with the rich, abundant life which is possible for the civilized man of today, that the life of the first submen, of the first true men, and even of the first civilized men was very meager indeed. So far as the first submen are concerned, the higher moral and spiritual values seem to have been lacking altogether; for it is only in the Cro-Magnon culture that anything resembling the higher moral and spiritual values begins to

make its appearance. Moreover, having to struggle so terrifically for mere existence, the early submen, together with most savages, have little time left for the cultivation of the higher life. Lacking the wealth of tradition, knowledge, and achievement which six thousand years of civilization have made available to modern man, their lives must of necessity be meager, like musical instruments with only a string or two. Even in the ancient civilizations, the higher life was possible for only a few at the top. The masses of men were either slaves or serfs, toiling their lives away to make possible the often extravagant luxury and self-indulgence of the upper classes. In Chapter 5 sufficient mention was made of the sufferings of the slaves upon whose backs the superstructure of the Roman Empire was reared.

As a whole, modern civilization cannot be defended, and no such defense is here intended. Any civilization that tolerates war and starvation cannot be defended in its totality. It is also true that many are hardly civilized, as civilization is understood here, that is in terms of a full appreciation of the higher values: Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Holiness. Many modern men, when it comes to these higher qualities, are little farther advanced than the savage. They are civilized only in the superficial sense of being able to make use of the mechanical toys and comforts which science has supplied in abundance. Again, in so far as modern civilization has become materialistic in outlook, it represents a devolution.

Nevertheless when all is said and done, the fact remains that there have been certain real gains. If progress is defined in terms of values, no reasonable mind, as it looks across the vast expanse of the ages, can deny that there are signs of advance. Once there were no values whatever. Only the blind forces of nature held sway and followed their relent-



less, inexorable course. Then life appeared, and values appeared with life, and as life developed, the capacity for value experience increased, finding its culmination in man, the very latest and highest product of the evolutionary process. Moreover, after the flight of countless centuries, man succeeded in developing civilizations, and with these civilizations newer and higher forms of value experience came into being. Thus it seems obvious enough that there is more than a grain of truth in the old idea of progress.

So far as our own times are concerned, there are at least three outstanding signs of progress. First, the fact that more people are literate than ever before in history, and hence capable, to some extent at least, of understanding basic issues and of exercising a measure of responsibility. It is true, of course, that many of them show little real insight and are just as susceptible to vicious propaganda as the ignorant rabble of ages past. Yet it cannot be denied that a literate public is absolutely essential to any program of social reform. Every reformer has to begin with education. An ignorant rabble is perfectly capable of being incited to outbursts of violence in the face of cruel injustices, but it is utterly incapable of sustained effort in dealing with basic causes. Thus the phenomenal growth in literacy constitutes real progress. Our need is not less education but more education, and above all a more adequate education in every land, a program that is not nationalistic but universal in scope, and one that is more interested in basic human problems than in scientific and mechanical techniques. A second and even greater sign of progress is the growing demand for justice in every land and for every class. Only in these terms can the Russian, the Chinese, and the Hindu revolutions be interpreted. Throughout the world there is a sound of chains being broken. The sleeping multitudes are fast

awakening. They are content to starve no longer. The third and greatest sign of progress is the growing international mind. Strong as nationalism still is, and will continue to be, there are real signs of a growing internationalism. No one can deny that more people in every land are thinking in world terms than ever before in any age or civilization in all human history. In other words, the vision of a few lonely individuals in other ages, the dream of a warless world, is becoming the conviction of many, and as we have already seen, man is forced to it by the superhuman process of history operating from without, as well as by his own rational and moral capacities operating from within. These two trends, the widespread concern for justice and the equally widespread concern for peace and world order, constitute our best ground of hope for the unknown future.

Our discussion of the increase and growth of values might well be brought to a close with what has been said. Nevertheless, since the apostles of pessimism and gloom are so numerous today that they threaten to undermine morale, to cut the nerve of creative endeavor and thus make catastrophe sure and certain, it behooves us to consider the development of values further. In fact, our task is not complete until we consider the whole range of value experience from the lowest to the very highest.

There are many kinds of real values. First of all, there are the lower values such as the economic, the bodily, the recreational, and work values.<sup>14</sup> No one can doubt that there has been progress so far as these are concerned. The primitive savage, though apparently free, was largely at the mercy of nature. To a lesser degree, the same applies to all civilizations previous to our own. The brilliant civilization of

<sup>14</sup> Suggested by E. S. Brightman's analysis in *A Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 95-96.

Athens during the time of Pericles was seriously menaced by the plague. The same is true of the Roman Empire at various times, and during the Middle Ages the Black Death swept across Europe and parts of Asia with fearful toll. Until recently man was practically helpless in the face of these scourges, but today, thanks to science, in many countries at least, plagues are largely a thing of the past. Science has already solved the food problem—only a crazy economic system stands in the way.

These lower values may not seem important to some thinkers, but two things must not be forgotten. First, they constitute the basis upon which the superstructures of life and civilization must be reared. Second, the failure to make possible these values for all men, as all past history shows, leads to class strife, revolution, dictatorship, and war. Communism has taught us that civilizations, as well as armies, go forward on their stomachs, and Christianity has taught us that all values are Divine gifts to men which must not be despised. Hence this decided increase, even in lower values, is a real gain and must not be lightly regarded. The only danger lies in a materialistic philosophy which regards these as the only true values and therefore as the real end of human existence.

Next in the scale of values are the social values, and at least so far as breadth is concerned, there has been real advance. While the savage lives very intensely within his own group, yet how limited his sympathies really are. They rarely reach beyond his tribe. Even the proud intellectual Greek or Roman had little real appreciation for those who belonged to another culture. Only a few remarkable individuals, chiefly Stoics, looked upon themselves as in any sense citizens of the world. Most men are still clinging to their tribalism and their nationalism, but tutored by the

great religions and the profoundest insights of some philosophers, beginning with the Stoics, and forced by the world crisis, there are, as we have seen, undoubtedly more people in the world today who embrace the world in their sympathies than ever before in history. Many individuals, though rooted in a particular culture, have made the priceless riches of all civilizations, both past and present, their own. This opens the possibility of a future world culture into which all the great cultures, living and dead, will pour their treasures as the rivers pour their waters into the sea, and the end result will be a richer life for mankind, far beyond the power of the imagination to picture.

That there has been rational and intellectual progress, no one can doubt. Reason is a potent factor in history, expressing itself especially in terms of philosophy and science and, to a lesser degree, through economic and political activity. No one will question the fact of progress in science and technology. Whether this constitutes true progress depends on what use is made of it. Nevertheless, science represents the triumph of reason over nature, and without science civilization is hardly possible. Science, and science alone, can lead to the conquest of disease and material want. It must therefore be used constructively. This is our major problem.

The greatest triumphs of reason, however, have been in the realm of philosophy. That there has been progress can be shown by a comparison of the crude myths of primitive man with the marvelous systems of a Plato, a Kant, a Hegel, a Bowne, a Whitehead. Moreover, reason, in terms of philosophy, has exerted a mighty influence in history. All the political systems of the world, whether they will acknowledge it or not—democracy, communism, fascism—are in one way or another indebted to Plato. Again, reason is never

more dominant in history than when it finds expression through some thoughtful, philosophically inclined leader such as Marcus Aurelius, King Asoka, William Penn, Gladstone, Jefferson, and Wilson. The tragedy of history consists, in part, in the dearth of such men. Moreover, it is becoming more and more evident that it is only as reason is applied more effectively in the future than in the past to both economics and politics that a better day is possible for the human race.

In short, reason has played a magnificent role in history in the past whenever and wherever it has been followed. It must play an even greater part in the future if chaos is to be avoided; and, as a matter of fact, one of the strongest proofs of reason in the cosmic order is the fact of the appearance of reason in man, and the part it has played and must play on the stage of world history. It seems to belong to the basic structure of things. The naturalist has a difficult time explaining the appearance of reason in a process which he claims to be basically irrational.

In the chapter on man, notice has already been taken of how the beautiful tends to enrich life and to make it more meaningful. Suffice it to say that there has been an increase in aesthetic values from the days of the cave man to the present day. The arts have blossomed in every civilization, and the extent of progress can be clearly shown by comparing the rude drawings of primitive man with those of a great master like Michelangelo, or crude primitive music with a symphony of Beethoven, or primitive rhyme with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This does not mean that progress in the arts has not lagged at times. In fact, progress in the arts as well as in religion and ethics is lagging today as compared with scientific and technological development. Nevertheless the heritage of the ages is ours, and a richer life is possible to



more people than ever before, except where, during these latter years, the plague of war has laid its gory hand.

Likewise, when we take the long view, who can deny that there has been moral and religious progress? Finding its dim beginnings with primitive man, conscience, in the modern sense, germinated in Sumeria, flowered in Egypt, and matured in the land of Palestine. Through the great Hebrew Prophets it finds classic expression, and the noble ideals of justice, righteousness, and peace enter as powerful factors into history. As a fit climax to this development, Christianity appeared and not only gives supreme expression to the ideal of love in the person of Jesus but also blends the best in the Hebrew heritage from Moses and the Prophets with the best in the Greek and Roman heritage. Perhaps in our own day Christianity will prove great enough and broad enough to create a synthesis of the best in all the other religions and ethical systems without sacrificing its own particular uniqueness and genius. This is its great opportunity in our day.

Aside from the ethical progress which religion has inspired, within religion itself there has been a remarkable development across the ages. Primitive religion shocks us with its crudeness, its magical elements, its cruelty and inhumanity. Human sacrifice and prostitution constituted part and parcel of the ritual of much early religion. These were the twin evils against which the Prophets of Israel contended so manfully. They did their work so well that religion and ethics have become one, especially in Christianity, Judaism, and to a lesser degree in Islam, the three most influential religions in the world today. Moreover, in spite of perversions, prophets have arisen again and again to purify religion and to broaden and deepen it. The Protestant Reformation, at its best, was such a movement, and

the same thing is true of the modern social gospel movement.

There has also been a decided advance in theology. Manaism, belief in a vague magical power; animism, nature alive with psychic forces more or less fixed to physical objects; spiritism, worship of spirits who can move freely; polytheism, worship of many gods, some of them with a shady character; henotheism, each nation with its own jealous god; and finally ethical monotheism, one, great, righteous, universal God of all men and of all nations—these are the chief stages through which religion has evolved. Who can deny that this constitutes a real advance? Religion still has trouble with its old foes, magic, superstition, and obscurantism, but it is surprising to what extent it has extricated itself.

When one thus surveys the field of human history, the amount of progress and in so many areas, however slow, is nothing short of astounding. There has been an increase and growth of values from the lowest economic and physical to the highest, rational, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual. Thus history again appears like the unfolding of a master plan. A benevolent Power, limited and in some ways temporarily blocked, but in the end resistless, seems to be working out Its high and lofty purposes upon the stage of history. World order and unity are, of course, necessary as conditions upon which progress in all else depends, but the aim and purpose of history, in so far as it can be realized within mundane limits, seems to be more than merely order and unity. In short, as Hegel foresaw,<sup>15</sup> the aim and

<sup>15</sup> "That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit—this is the true *Theodicaea*, the justification of God in History."—G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: The Willey Book Co., 1900), p. 457. Used by permission.

purpose of history seems to be the fullest possible flowering of all the higher capacities of man, and hence a more meaningful and abundant life for all. And if, as the astronomers tell us, some ten billion years lie ahead, then, unless man willfully destroys himself, he may yet build a civilization, a world civilization that will at least approximate the agelong hope of a Kingdom of God upon earth. Therefore we must take courage. The message of history, seen in its true perspective, is not a message of despair and gloom but of hope.

### THE POWER OF IDEALS AND IDEALISTS

In his *Human Destiny*, du Noüy calls our attention to the fact that once men are convinced that the idealist is really sincere, there arises a strong tendency to respond to the moral and spiritual ideal.

Real recognized disinterestedness carries within itself an invincible force which will always have the advantage over the most subtle philosophies. Men are sensitive to it, intuitively, without any explanations, as if they all knew that it symbolizes an incontestable ideal from which they are separated only by their passions, their cowardice, and their vices.<sup>16</sup>

Even politicians recognize this strange human susceptibility and response to ideals, and hence often clothe their designs in idealistic language. Likewise the Marxian communists, even though they claim that ideals are relative, are capable of making passionate appeals in the name of justice with surprising results. Finally, the power of ideals is demonstrated by the fact that even warmongers and dictators, these devotees of the cult of power and the naked sword, have to resort to the idealistic appeal before they can

<sup>16</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 251. Used by permission.

arouse men sufficiently to make the necessary sacrifices which war demands. This disproves decisively the contention of some that brute force and economic necessity alone determine history.

Ideals are especially powerful when they become incarnate in strong men. Even evil men secretly tend to respect "powerful goodness." Wicked Herod had a certain awe for John the Baptist, sometimes listened to him with interest and even protected him until that evil day when he was beguiled by the dancing of Herodias' daughter.<sup>17</sup> Attila spared Rome when confronted by an unarmed Christian bishop, and in our own day Gandhi's power over the evil passions of men was at times nothing short of phenomenal.

Again, in spite of the persecution and the tragic death of many good men, no one can deny the power of their influence, in fact, made thrice more powerful by their death. Socrates, St. Paul, and Jesus cannot be forgotten. Their influence increases with the ages. At first the prophets, the bearers of a new ideal, are laughed out of court, scorned, driven out of town, crucified in one way or another. Later they become heroes. "The prophets of Israel are still a power in the world though the kings have only historical interest. . . . Paul has more power today than all the Roman emperors."<sup>18</sup> Commenting on "the cumulative effect" of people who live by faith and love, Bennett goes on to say, "one could multiply illustrations *ad nauseam*."<sup>19</sup>

The martyrs represent one of the most powerful levers of humanity, and can transform a bloodthirsty mob into a group of men ready to die for an ideal of justice or freedom. That is why, in the course of revolutions, governments are

<sup>17</sup> Mark 6:17-29.

<sup>18</sup> John C. Bennett, *Social Salvation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 159. This and other passages used by permission.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

usually careful not to "make martyrs," so as not to arouse an unmanageable fanaticism in the crowd. . . . Who knows if Christianity would have developed had Jesus not been crucified? <sup>20</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to note how many causes that were once merely ideals held by a small group have won majority support and triumphed. Among those upon which "the civilized world has turned its back," Bennett lists: "human sacrifice, religious persecution, the subjection of women, slavery, punishment without trial, the use of torture by responsible authorities, dueling to kill, the uncontrolled exploitation of men, women, and children in industry, irresponsible government, the right of a nation to wage war in the pursuit of any policy without regard to any international sanctions." <sup>21</sup> Of course, during the recent war many of these evils reappeared, as is inevitable in wartime, but never before in all history have they been more under indictment by the conscience of the world, especially as it tries to express itself through the United Nations. No representative of any nation would openly champion any of these evils before the tribunal of the United Nations. Thus the Dutch represented their imperialistic exploitation and suppression of Indonesia under the guise of exercising "police power."

It becomes evident, then, that ideals are not nearly so powerless in history as they sometimes seem to be. The prophets and martyrs blaze the way. Later, stung by shame, and also often goaded by dire necessity under pain of disintegration and destruction, mankind organizes against evil and outlaws it. This tendency gives us hope that the same thing may be done with war in our day. In fact, the devel-

<sup>20</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 251. Used by permission.

<sup>21</sup> Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 153.



opment and increase of peace sentiment from the days of the Hebrew Prophets to the organization of the United Nations in our own day is another illustration of the growth and power of ideals in history. Moreover, this increasing power of ideals in history, together with their necessity for human survival, seems to be another indication that a plan and purpose is being realized in and through the historical process. History is guided by a Power which expresses Itself through ideals and their eventual realization, and which, in spite of temporary hindrances, cannot be permanently blocked. Therefore man is not at the mercy of Fate, and history need not end in utter catastrophe in our day, but we can, if we will, go forward with God.

### MORAL LAW AND JUDGMENT

Viewed from the surface and in the short run, history often shows few signs of moral law and judgment. The powerful instead of the meek, often as not, inherit the earth and dominate it ruthlessly. The righteous may cry aloud to God for judgment but receive no answer except the mocking echo of their cry. God seems to be absent or heartlessly unconcerned.

How long, O Lord, must I cry for help, and thou  
not hear?

Call to thee, "Violence," and thou not save? <sup>22</sup>

In the long run, however, history does display a kind of rough justice.

It has been truly said that "whom God wishes to destroy he first deprives of reason." <sup>23</sup> Most wicked men, sooner or

<sup>22</sup> Hab. 1:1.

<sup>23</sup> The origin of this statement is obscure. See *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 12th ed., p. 175, col. 1, n. 2.

later, impelled by their wickedness, tend, in an unguarded moment to overreach themselves and to cast aside the restraints of reason. Alexander was successful and began to play the god, shocked and alienated his friends by his haughty ungratefulness, and died because of his own excesses. Napoleon and Hitler both made the mistake of invading Russia. No one ever played the king more magnificently than Louis XIV of France, but at what a cost! With a long reign of over seventy years, because of the excesses of his ambition he went to his deathbed realizing that he had prepared the way to ruin. Pathetically he counseled his great-grandson, the weak Louis XV, to live at peace with his neighbors and to give the people justice. But it was too late, and Louis XV, seeing the danger and not knowing what to do in order to avert it, was in the habit of saying, with hopeless resignation: "After us the deluge." It burst with a vengeance over the head of the pitifully incapable, blundering Louis XVI.

There seems to be something in the very structure of the universe and of history which serves to resist great wickedness. This is the burden of the message of all the world's greatest ethical teachers, and especially of the Prophets of Israel. "Against the stone-wall defensive structure of God's elemental justice, earth's conquerors and exploiters hurl themselves eventually to their own destruction."<sup>24</sup> History teems with illustrations. Every one of the five worst Roman emperors, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and Caracalla, met a violent death and are remembered with contempt and horror. The fate of Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists is well known. Jacob Abbott concludes his *Genghis Khan* with these words:

<sup>24</sup> Walter Marshall Horton, *Realistic Theology* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1934), p. 113. Used by permission.

The fate of the grand empire which Genghis Khan established was the same with that of all others that have arisen in the world, from time to time, by the extension of the power of great military commanders over widely-separated and heterogeneous nations. The sons and successors to whom the vast possessions descended soon quarreled among themselves, and the immense fabric fell to pieces in less time than it had taken to construct it.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover it is evident that the chief reason why some wicked leaders endure as long as they do is because they exercise some measure of reason and restraint, or else personally possess some particular virtue or inherit a good name. Many a wicked ruler has been able to lord it over his subjects because of the tremendous prestige of the ruling house, due to the virtues of his illustrious predecessors. Thus it is doubtful if Commodus could have continued as long as he did if it had not been for the enormous amount of good will, on the part of the Roman public, who remembered the virtues of his great father, Marcus Aurelius, and the almost saintly character of Antoninus Pius, the noble foster father of Marcus Aurelius.

There are, of course, many examples of tyrants rising to power and maintaining themselves for a long time. In fact, Genghis Khan remained in power and went on conquering for a lifetime. But it must be remembered that he professed a divine call to conquer the world which inspired his soldiers to follow him campaign after campaign, and he is also credited with a remarkable degree of political wisdom and even religious toleration.<sup>26</sup> Tamerlane was a model of self-discipline, and Adolf Hitler rose to power as the

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Abbott, *Genghis Khan* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1901), p. 335. Used by permission.

<sup>26</sup> *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. XII, p. 396; see also H. G. Wells' interesting comments in his *Outline of History*, pp. 669-75.

champion of an oppressed people. These virtues account to a great extent for the successes of these evil leaders, for pure evil is so absolutely irrational by its very nature that it is utterly impossible for an individual as well as a society to survive for any length of time on the basis of sheer evil alone. Absolute evil would very quickly destroy itself. Even among thieves there must be a certain amount of honor, and a society of murderers could only survive as long as the murderers limited their killing to those outside the group.

In short, the lesson of history seems to be that no society or empire that is founded primarily on violence, and continues to live by violence alone, in which justice and sound reason are at a minimum, can long endure. The chief reason why the Roman Empire stood for centuries in spite of the mad excesses of many of its rulers is because it embodied certain great ideals: a rough justice, a large measure of tolerance, order, and the *Pax Romana* which brought a greater stability than the ancient world had ever known. If history, then, shows anything, it is the fact that sooner or later naked evil dooms itself by its own excesses.

It is also well to remember that both hatred and selfishness, if great enough and continued long enough, always bring ruin. Thus the Marxian Communist preaching his doctrines of class hatred and violent revolution invokes his opposites, the Nazi and the Fascist, who with even greater fanaticism preach their gospel of nationalism and racialism. The result is a fiendish war which came near destroying Communist Russia as well as Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Likewise, the United States, smug, rich, selfish, refuses to join the League of Nations, this first real attempt at a world community. Due largely to her refusal to join, the League fails, thus making it easy for a narrow and

extremely violent nationalism to capture Germany, Italy, and Japan, and the end result is World War II. Again, the United States, moved by race prejudice, passes the Japanese Exclusion Act and thus arouses the indignation and hate of a proud nation; and to cap it all, the Americans help Japan to build up her war machine by supplying her liberally with scrap iron. The result is the Pearl Harbor attack and our consequent involvement in the inhuman struggle.

The tragedy of it all is the blindness and stubborn unwillingness of men and nations to learn anything from history. As a result, they repeat the same old mistakes and suffer the same dire consequences. Nothing, however, is more certain than the fact that in our day the nations have been driven into a corner where they must make the fateful choice between brotherhood in terms of a world community or utter destruction.

Thus the processes of history, seen in their true perspective, along with the individual conscience, bear witness to the fact of moral law and judgment; and it may well be added that if there is moral law and judgment, it is reasonable to suppose that there must also be a Moral Orderer and Judge. Moreover, this moral order seems to be on the increase. Two processes of development, in fact, are evident. On the one hand there is man's growing moral sensitivity, and on the other hand the evidence that his indulgence in evil is becoming increasingly more costly and destructive. The savage in his relative moral innocence can wage war without any qualms of conscience and on the whole with relatively little destructiveness. The civilized man, on the contrary, has to carry on his wars not only with an increasingly guilty conscience but also with the assurance that, like Samson, he is pulling down the temple—this time,



however, unlike Samson, not the temple of Dagon but of civilization itself. This again shows that along with the physical order there is a growing moral order which is forcing man upward at the peril of greater and greater penalties for his refusal. Therefore it seems reasonable to hold that there is a purpose in history, a moral purpose, and this fact points to some kind of theism.

### PROVIDENCE

The doctrine of providence, of special Divine guidance and the overruling of events to make possible a greater good or to prevent a calamity is not in good repute today. Many, in fact, as they view both the realm of nature and of history, see little or no evidence even of a general direction of events in terms of purpose. They see nothing but a tangled web of human actions, and Fate in terms of inexorable natural law as the final arbiter of destiny. However, before such sheer skepticism can hope to prove its case, it will have to come to grips with the teleological facts which have been presented in this present chapter and also in Chapters 3 and 4. Chance, the ultimate principle to which all atheists must sooner or later appeal, seems a very naïve explanation of these ponderous facts.

Not all of the blame for the present plight of the doctrine of providence, however, can be laid at the door of skepticism. A large part of it must be borne by the theologians themselves. Altogether too often in the past, many of them have made unwarranted claims of special, direct Divine intervention in favor of their cause, or group, or nation. Thus, during wartime, especially in days when religious belief was strong, every nation claimed that God was on its

side. Time and again a haughty conqueror has attributed his victory to his god. The Assyrians did so, and even Genghis Khan, Attila, and Tamerlane professed to be agents of God. This fact should give all theologians pause.

The great need of our day is a more adequate conception of providence. Aside from its tribalistic and nationalistic bias, the old conception is deistic rather than theistic. God is thought of, for the most part at least, as being in some strange sense apart from and external to the ordinary flow of historic events. Only at certain points in terms of certain extraordinary and crucial events, such as creation, the call of Abraham and Moses, the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians, and the advent, life, teaching, death, resurrection, and second coming of Christ does God enter into history in any real and determining way. Thus the doctrine of providence has been cast largely in the thought forms of the old and now untenable apocalypticism.

Again, some modern theologians, out of reverence for Jesus Christ, sometimes give one the impression that only in the person of Christ has God entered into history. This kind of theology does no honor to Jesus Christ nor does it advance his cause. Jesus himself would not have agreed. To leave the impression that God entered into history only at a special point, however significant, and that two thousand years ago, is to surrender altogether too much to skepticism. If God entered into history at only one point or only at certain designated points long ago, then men may well doubt whether He enters into history at all and they may even doubt whether He exists at all. But in the light of the vast array of teleological facts, it would seem that all history is in a real sense a manifestation of God. This does not take away from God's mighty workings through Jesus Christ. They really take on a new significance and meaning

as the highest peak of a process that is as old as the universe itself.

The doctrine of providence, then, if it is to be meaningful today in the light of history, must be recast in truly theistic terms. It must be enlarged so as to embrace both transcendence and immanence. Transcendence in the sense that however much any event, or even the whole order of events which constitute history, may embody of the Divine Will and Purpose, God is always other and more, just as the human self is always other and more than any of its concrete manifestations. That is, events can never express all that there is of God. Immanence in the sense that all events in some way fall within the experience of God, so that no event, however insignificant, is utterly external to Him, but is in some way related and perhaps capable of expressing something of His nature and purpose, or perhaps the conditions, limitations, and necessities under which He must labor.

This does not mean that all events equally express God's purpose. There may, in fact, be events so evil and irrational as to be incapable of expressing anything of God's purpose. Again, there may be events which more directly, immediately, more clearly and powerfully and effectively express God's Will and Purpose. There may well be what has been called "the diviner immanence."<sup>27</sup> The divineness of an event may be measured by its rationality, its ethical value, and its general meaningfulness. In what is to follow we shall concern ourselves with phenomena which through the centuries many have regarded as more direct, immediate and certain evidences of the Divine Agent as operative in history.

<sup>27</sup> The title of a book by Bishop Francis J. McConnell (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1910).

1. "*The Cunning of Reason,*" or *Overruling Evil*

The phrase, "the cunning of reason," is Hegel's,<sup>28</sup> but the idea back of it is much older. It goes back to the first Isaiah. About the year 701 B.C., when the Assyrian crisis was at its height and many of his countrymen were whispering that the Assyrian gods were more powerful than Yahweh, the God of Israel, Isaiah, as we have seen, came to the conclusion that the one true and universal God was using even this heathen conqueror to carry out His great purpose.<sup>29</sup> Everyone else saw nothing more in this Assyrian than his greed for conquest and his lust for power. Even the Assyrian himself thought that he was following no higher master than his own sovereign will, and of course, seen from a lower level, this was true. However, viewed from the higher perspective, from which history must be viewed if its true meaning is to be ascertained, even this ruthless invader was subject to a higher Will.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, having no better instrument at hand, God made use of even this ruthless Assyrian to bring men to their senses. May this also be the ultimate meaning of Hitler? Since the Allies had wreaked their revenge upon a defeated and helpless people and had turned their backs on brotherhood by sabotaging the League of Nations, perhaps God, through dire necessity, could not do otherwise than allow Hitler to rise to power. But having allowed Hitler to rise to power, God overruled this tragic necessity by using even him as a terrible yet effective instrument of warning to mankind of the need of justice and brotherhood. At any rate, since Hitler, more people are coming to realize the

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> See previous discussion, Chapter 2, pages 21-22.

<sup>30</sup> Isa. 10:5-34.

nature of the world crisis and more are thinking in world terms than ever before in all of human history. In spite of the baneful influence of Karl Barth, even some of the Lutherans, especially the younger generation, are beginning to realize that the church has a definite social responsibility. Before Hitler, nearly all Lutherans, following Luther's theory of the two spheres, held that it was not the place of the church to judge and criticize the state. Today, inspired by the courageous example of Martin Niemöller, they show evidences of a mighty awakening. When one considers the tremendous religious conviction which Lutheranism is capable of bringing to bear on the social problem, this new awareness of responsibility may well be regarded as nothing short of providential.

If Adolf Hitler served as an instrument to awaken the social consciousness of the church and of mankind in general, the same is even more true of Marxian communism. Whatever else may be said of it, communism has certainly made more people throughout the world think in terms of social justice than any other movement in history, except the prophetic movement in Israel. After having warned mankind for twenty-five hundred years through the great prophets and teachers of all great nations without the desired effect, may not the Communist of today be an instrument in the hands of God to convince men that the social order, if it is to stand, must be built upon the strong foundations of justice? Woe be to those who refuse to heed this grim warning!<sup>31</sup>

This reading of history does no violence to the facts; it seems to do more justice to all the facts than any other. Four more examples of the overruling of evil for good must

<sup>31</sup> For a convincing exposition of this view see S. Eddy, *God in History*, pp. 114-24, 170-82.



be considered. Alexander went forth chiefly to conquer, and at the same time made a lasting contribution by spreading Greek culture all over the Orient, which in turn had great consequences for the future. It is doubtful whether a world religion such as Christianity could have arisen in Palestine if it had not been for this blending of Hellenistic and Hebrew culture which had been going on for some centuries before the rise of the new religion. With Christianity, this marriage of Hellenistic and Hebrew culture became complete and thus the best from both civilizations has come down to us today.

Another example of providence seems to be the Hebrew captivity in Babylon. When Nebuchadrezzar, the Babylonian king, razed Jerusalem to the ground and took the Chosen People captive, to a contemporary Hebrew it looked like the end of all things. But out of this fiery furnace came a refined and purified remnant, dedicated, as no race had ever been, to ethical monotheism and bearing with it potentially the greatest hope for the future of mankind. Again, when the moon of Mohammed rose, Christians could see nothing but evil and doom in store for themselves. Out of this seemingly evil thing, however, arose a great civilization with its center at Bagdad which not only served to save the ancient learning but also added to it and thus helped to lay the foundations of modern civilization.

Finally, there were the Crusades. The objective was trivial. Most of the expeditions ended in sheer tragedy, and all of them served to further inflame the already existing hatred between Christian and Moslem. Yet the Crusades did bring the cruder Christian civilization of the West in touch with certain vital sources of the ancient learning which the Moslems had discovered and nurtured. Out of this grew the Renaissance, and eventually our modern

Western civilization, which with all its faults seems to be the only one which is still alive and creative. In short, this, as well as the many other examples given, seems to show that there is a Power at work in history that cunningly uses evil itself and tries to turn it into good.

## 2. *Great Enterprises Out of Unpromising Beginnings*

Moreover, as one reads history, one cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that so many really great and significant movements began in such a small, fragile, and unpromising manner. Hearing old Socrates arguing in the streets of Athens, no contemporary would have dared prophesy that here was the fountainhead of what was one day to become the greatest intellectual movement in all history. Beholding Rome as a small, struggling village in the year 700 B.C., no one would have been so rash as to think that some day it would be the seat of a world empire. Nor would anyone have surmised that the few runaway slaves who took advantage of Egypt's "time of troubles" would one day astound the world.

Certainly, no inhabitant of Samaria, on hearing Amos around 750 B.C., would have guessed that he was witnessing the beginning of the greatest moral and spiritual movement of all time. Likewise, no one would have dreamed on seeing Jesus and his little band of disciples walking down the lanes of Palestine two thousand years ago that one day out of this small, seemingly insignificant fellowship would arise the Christian Church. It may well be that Jesus built far greater than he himself ever realized. If he was dominated by the apocalyptic idea, as Schweitzer and many other New Testament scholars think, then he certainly accomplished far more than he expected. For if he had actually returned on the clouds of heaven within a short time, as even the

writers of the Synoptic Gospels expected him to do, he would have saved only a few souls at the most. As the situation turned out, he has transformed more human lives and affected the course of human history for these two thousand years more profoundly than any other mortal who has ever walked this green earth, and the chances are that he will continue to do so indefinitely in the future.

No proud Roman of the first century A.D., on seeing the little despised sect called Christians, would have surmised that within a little more than two hundred years a Roman emperor would recognize Christianity as the official religion of the empire. Nor did any contemporary recognize John Wyclif, hounded and persecuted as he was, as the "Morning Star," the herald of a mighty dawn, of a new reform movement that would transform the corrupt and decadent church and give it a new lease on life. Moreover, the Methodist Movement, which later played such a large part in revitalizing Protestantism, had its humble beginnings with a handful of students who gathered around the Wesleys at Oxford. Likewise the modern peace movement, which is more and more permeating the churches, took its rise largely from the efforts of the despised and much persecuted mystic, George Fox.

Again, there is Christopher Columbus setting out under the most unfavorable conditions to find a new route to India, and failing in this fixed purpose he achieved a far greater one in discovering a new continent where Europe's old animosities could be forgotten and where civilization could take a fresh start. Finally, the founding fathers of the United States hardly realized the full significance of the enterprise which they were launching, an enterprise which not only resulted in a great nation but which also, at least during its earlier days, inspired the hopes of oppressed

people throughout the world. Surely, as these many examples seem to show, there must be a Power at work in history that watches with longing over movements in the right direction and prospers them, however insignificant and unpromising their beginnings may seem to be.

### 3. *Saviors*

In the chapter on irrational factors in history it became evident that there are human monsters and destroyers. This, however, it will be shown now, is but one side of the total story. There are also saviors and healers. Great statesmen such as Hammurabi, David, Solon, Pericles, Julius Caesar, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, King Asoka, King Akbar, William Penn, Gladstone, Jefferson, Lincoln, Wilson, Gandhi, Nehru, and scores of others who could be named, qualify in a real sense as healers and saviors. They truly represent the flowering of man's rational and political capacities, and by means of their genius as statesmen they rescue mankind from chaos and anarchy. They provide the basis for that stability and order without which civilization cannot develop. At their best, they are evidences of purpose in history and are nothing short of real instruments of providence.<sup>32</sup> In fact, it was for the ideal king who would execute justice and righteousness, and who would promote true religion and peace, that some of the greatest Hebrew Prophets were looking.<sup>33</sup>

Great scientists such as Hippocrates, Galen, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Harvey, Pasteur, Lister, Darwin, Einstein, and the many others who might be mentioned are also saviors in a real sense. Some of them, such as Copernicus,

<sup>32</sup> For statesmen as instruments of the Divine Will see Eddy, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-99.

<sup>33</sup> See especially Isa. 9, 11 and Micah 5; see also previous discussion, Chapter 2, page 23.

Newton, and Darwin, in exploding old superstitions and half truths and in giving us a wider perspective, have saved us from error, ignorance, and dangerous outbursts of inhuman fanaticism of certain types.<sup>34</sup> Others, such as Hippocrates, Pasteur, and Lister, have saved mankind from the ravages of plagues and disease and have made a longer life span possible for the individual. Thus science at its best can truly be an embodiment of Divine purpose and benevolence. There is no limit to the good which it may do. Civilization cannot possibly go on without it. Only in the hands of unprincipled men does it become a destroyer.

The greatest and most important "saviors of mankind,"<sup>35</sup> are the eminent, illustrious, philosophical, ethical, and religious teachers. To these men look for light on the meaning and purpose and goal of human life. Without these guiding stars, statecraft becomes cheap, shallow, opportunistic, corrupt, and science becomes cold, unprincipled, ready to sell its services to the highest bidder and therefore the enemy rather than the friend of man. Even in primitive society one finds their predecessors in the form of the medicine man, shaman, or sorcerer. Many of these were gifted intellectually and artistically, and they often gathered about them the most promising young men of the tribe in order to instruct them in ancient lore and tradition.<sup>36</sup>

It is in the great civilizations, however, that the real "saviors of mankind" appear. Every important civilization has had one or more. In the ancient Sumerian civilization and its daughters, the Babylonian and Assyrian, the priestly

<sup>34</sup> Science, for example, has put an end to the killing of old women accused of witchcraft. It has also abolished the abuse of the insane.

<sup>35</sup> The title of an interesting study of eleven great teachers by William R. Van Buskirk (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929).

<sup>36</sup> For the role of the medicine man in primitive society, see du Noüy, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-29.



hierarchies, in so far as they were really creative and not oppressive, exercised this function.<sup>37</sup> The same is also largely true of the earliest civilization of Egypt. Nevertheless it is in ancient Egypt that the saviors in the form of prophets with real moral and spiritual vision first appear. The greatest of them all was Ikhnaton, who reigned from 1375 to 1358 B.C., and who though a Pharaoh was more of a philosopher, religious teacher, mystic, and prophet than a ruler. He was perhaps the world's first monotheist, but how unready the world was for such a man of vision!<sup>38</sup> Likewise Persia had its Zoroaster, with his emphasis on truth and purity; China its Confucius, with his concern for propriety and social righteousness, and Lao-tze, with his regard for humility; India its Buddha, with his boundless compassion for all creatures; and Arabia its Mohammed, with his concern for justice for the poor, the brotherhood of all believers, and the greatness of God.

However, among all the nations of the world, two of the very smallest produced the most really great teachers. The first of these is Greece, and among the cities of Greece, Athens is pre-eminent. There was Socrates (469-399 B.C.), the Father of Philosophy, who first taught men to think clearly and courageously and by means of his dialectic exposed the shallow relativism of the Sophists and thus discovered the rational basis of ethics. He was followed by his even greater pupil, Plato (427-347 B.C.), who produced the world's first significant and enduring philosophical system. Moreover, he discovered the rational basis of theology, and centuries later Christianity itself became his debtor.<sup>39</sup> In

<sup>37</sup> For Sumerian contributions see C. L. Wooley, *The Sumerians*, pp. 181-93; and Eddy, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-52.

<sup>38</sup> For Ikhnaton, see previous discussion, Chapter 2, page 19.

<sup>39</sup> For Christianity's debt to Plato and Greek philosophy see H. A. Bosley, *The Philosophical Heritage of the Christian Faith*.

fact, so great was his genius and breadth of comprehension that to this day no really serious thinker can ignore him. Plato in turn was followed by his brilliant pupil, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), who not only laid the foundations for most of the sciences but also made contributions to theology and in ethics gave us the doctrine of the Golden Mean. Finally, there are the thinkers known as the Stoics, with their emphasis on self-discipline and courage, their belief in a God who in many ways resembles the Christian conception, and their cosmopolitanism. The Stoics were truly the first world citizens.

The second nation is the Hebrew, which contributed a whole galaxy of teachers and prophets. There was Moses, the Lawgiver, who is revered by three of the world's greatest religions. Following him some four or five centuries later, there is the great line of Hebrew Prophets rising upon the face of history like a majestic mountain range. Since we dealt with the Prophets as philosophers of history in Chapter 2, it will suffice to merely summarize the contributions of the most outstanding figures among them. There was Amos, the herald of social justice and judgment; Hosea, with his emphasis on the forgiving love of God; Isaiah, the Hebrew Calvin, with his message centered around the transcendence and holiness of God, and God's mighty work in history; Micah, who summarized the teachings of his predecessors in a never-to-be-forgotten formula;<sup>40</sup> Jeremiah, who anticipated Jesus in so many ways; Ezekiel, the Father of Judaism; and finally, the Second Isaiah, the great unknown prophet of the Exile who is the most universal of all in his outlook and who envisages a universal redemption in terms of a suffering Messiah.<sup>41</sup> Failures

<sup>40</sup> See Micah 6:6-8.

<sup>41</sup> Isa. 53.

though the Prophets seemed to be in their own day, yet no group of men, aside from Christ and Buddha, have had so great an influence over the conscience and conduct of mankind. Unable to realize their own immediate objective, that of saving their country from disaster in their own day, they received insights and blazed trails that will forever class them among the saviors of mankind.

Finally, in the fullness of time there came one who most truly answers man's deepest spiritual cravings and who best embodies the moral and spiritual ideal. The New Testament writers, as well as the older Christian theologians, took great pains to show that he fulfilled the many Messianic promises of the Old Testament. In so far as they tried to show that he literally fulfilled them, they were mistaken. In its older form, the argument from prophecy is untenable today; but who can doubt that in a deeper sense the New Testament writers and the older theologians were on the right trail? Jesus does represent the fulfilment of the best insights of the prophets, poets, wise men, and scribes who had a part in the making of the Old Testament. In a real sense they prepared the way for him, as Jesus himself recognized.<sup>42</sup> In fact, only in a culture and a civilization such as the Hebrew of his day, enriched by the contributions of the many renowned teachers who had appeared before, would it have been possible for Jesus to have arisen.

Again, those who had a part in making the Old Testament were not the only ones who prepared the way. In a real sense the ancient medicine men and shamans began the long process. What took place and developed in Sumeria, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, as well as what took place among the Hebrews, prepared the way for this great world character, who, more than any other,

<sup>42</sup> Matt. 5:17.

has earned the title of the world's Savior. The land of Palestine, situated at the crossroads of the world where the rich religious heritage of the Jews could freely mingle and blend with that of Greece and Rome and also with that of still other and more ancient cultures, was the logical birth-place of such a character. The procession of great cultures and teachers, together with the contributions of Rome in establishing a world empire and thus bringing many nations and civilizations together, as well as establishing the necessary stability and peace and the means of travel for the spread of a world religion—all of this looks like the work of a benign Providence making a desperate attempt to heal and redeem His creation through the instrumentality of a supreme personality, the only fit means for such a mighty task.

One does not have to believe that Jesus was in any sense literally God in order to believe that he truly represents God's most effective single act in history; for Jesus, more than any other world figure, represents the highest incarnation of the moral and the spiritual ideal. Moreover, his effectiveness in history is amply proved by the redeeming, saving impulse that originated with him.

From that brief life and its apparent frustration has flowed a more powerful force for the triumphal waging of man's long battle than any other ever known by the human race. Through it millions have had their inner conflicts resolved in progressive victory over their baser impulses. By it millions have been sustained in the greatest tragedies of life and have come through radiant. Through it hundreds of millions have been lifted from illiteracy and ignorance and have been placed upon the road of growing intellectual freedom and of control over their physical environment. It has done more to allay the physical ills of disease and famine than any other impulse known to man. It has emancipated millions from

chattel slavery and millions of others from thralldom to vice. It has protected tens of millions from exploitation by their fellows. It has been the most fruitful source of movements to lessen the horrors of war and to put the relations of men and nations on the basis of justice and peace.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. *The Living Church*

Out of the tremendous impulse which came from Jesus, the Christian Church was born. It is by no means the only religious institution through which the Divine purpose and benevolence has expressed itself. All races have their temples and religious institutions, and to some extent all of them may be regarded as in some sense vehicles of Providence. Likewise, the other fundamental human institutions which make civilization and man's higher life possible—the home, the school, and the state—may be regarded as means which God has established to accomplish His purposes. Above them all, however, so far as the moral and the spiritual development of the race is concerned, looms the Christian Church.

This is not to say that the church is perfect, since it is made up of frail, weak, erring human beings who feel the downward pull of their animal impulses. It has shared in many of the hideous perversions discussed in Chapter 5. It has often become corrupt, tyrannical, worldly, materialistic, militaristic and has often betrayed its Master. Moreover, in our day it has lost much of its spiritual power because it has failed to rise to its opportunity and has exhausted itself in days past in fruitless internal strife and endless divisions.

Nevertheless there has never been a time when it has been utterly devoid of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Even when

<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. VII, *Advance Through Storm* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), pp. 503-4. Used by permission.



most tyrannical and worldly, sooner or later, prophets have arisen to challenge it and to cleanse it and thus cause it to recapture and radiate once more the saving influence of its Lord. Among these prophets have been such names as St. Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, John Wyclif, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Knox, the Wesleys, and countless others. One of the hopeful signs of our day is the fact that the church, aroused by living prophets, is once more becoming conscious of its responsibility. It is becoming conscious of its need for unity, for spiritual power, and its responsibility for both individual and social redemption. The recent Amsterdam Assembly revealed that throughout the Christian Church across the world there are mighty stirrings.<sup>44</sup>

In spite of its many shortcomings, when viewed across the centuries, the Christian Church has made at least six significant contributions. First of all, by providing a spiritual fellowship it has nourished moral and spiritual values and thus enriched, ennobled, and blessed countless of millions of human beings through the ages. There is no question but that their lives would have been less meaningful without this holy and beneficent ministry. In fact, the lives of many would have been nothing short of frightful. Religion helps men to discipline themselves, and in pointing them to God, helps them to find the central Source of value and meaning. This the church has been doing for nearly two thousand years.

Second, the church has been the greatest single humanizing and civilizing agent in history. It has especially emphasized the sacredness of human life and the primacy of ethical love. The Greek and Roman world was certainly not

<sup>44</sup> For a complete account of this significant Assembly see *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, the official report of the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948).

devoid of humanitarianism, but along with certain shocking practices which were tolerated without serious protest it also lacked the dynamic, crusading spirit which Christianity provided. Thus the church attacked and eliminated infanticide, and the gladiatorial combats; it gave dignity to the life of the slave, and it cared for the sick and the infirm on a scale and in a way that had never been tried before.<sup>45</sup>

Amid the softening influence of philosophy and civilisation, it taught the supreme sanctity of love. . . . To a world that had grown very weary gazing on the cold and passionless grandeur which Cato realised, and which Lucan sung, it presented an ideal of compassion and of love—a Teacher who could weep by the sepulchre of His friend, who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover it must not be forgotten that it was Christianity which softened the barbarians so that when Rome was taken they did not utterly destroy it but showed unusual compassion for its inhabitants.<sup>47</sup> Again, it was through heroic missionaries such as Augustine, St. Patrick, Boniface, and countless others that our pagan forefathers gave up their bloody religions in which human sacrifice played so large a part.

Third, the church has been the friend of learning far more than is generally realized. In spite of the destructiveness of certain fanatics, it helped to save many of the Greek and Roman classics along with the Hebrew Bible. During the Dark Ages when the light of knowledge burned so low, it was kept alive in many a monastery, and during the later Middle Ages it was the church which fostered the great European universities. It is also interesting to note that

<sup>45</sup> See H. G. Wood, *Christianity and Civilisation*, pp. 6-18.

<sup>46</sup> William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of European Morals* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1904), Vol I, p. 388. Used by permission.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, Book I, chap. I, pp. 4-5.

among the first scientists, the heralds of the modern scientific movement, was Roger Bacon, a monk. Finally, many of the greatest modern universities in the United States were founded and fostered by the church.<sup>48</sup> In short, it would seem that if there had been no Christian Church, Western civilization, the only one which Toynbee thinks is still creative, would never have been.

Fourth, the church symbolizes the greatest and most all-embracing, universal, and dynamic idea known to man, the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Speaking of the early church, Lecky says: "It proclaimed, amid a vast movement of social and national amalgamation, the universal brotherhood of mankind."<sup>49</sup> In spite of her many divisions and her slowness in translating this great ideal into fact the church has continued to nurture it, and in her worst moments it has served as a whip or a spur and as a beacon to challenge her in her best. Never in all of its history has the church been more conscious of this lofty ideal than today. It is the basis of the missionary movement and also of the crusade for peace.

Fifth, amid the flux of history the church has held before the world absolute and unchanging ideals. One reason why so many civilizations have gone to pieces is because men have lost sight of moral and spiritual absolutes. Seeing the inadequacies of their own culture and tradition, and failing to probe deeper to find the absolutes, men sink in the treacherous quicksands of relativism. For if there are really no absolute norms, and if everything is relative, then one code of ethics is no better or worse than another. Every man is free to choose what suits his own desires or selfish interests. The result is chaos. However, since order is essen-

<sup>48</sup> For the religious beginnings of some of the great American universities see W. W. Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America*, pp. 313-16.

<sup>49</sup> Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 388. Used by permission.

tial to society, sooner or later some strong man arises, a dictator, and imposes his will as absolute.

One reason why Greek civilization made shipwreck was that the older tradition could no longer enlist the loyalties of the rising generation. As a result, the Sophists arose, and whatever may have been the virtues and good intentions of the earlier leaders of the movement, the younger representatives were out-and-out relativists. Thus Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* contends that justice has no moral implications but that might makes right.<sup>50</sup> Socrates and Plato challenged these skeptics, but the Athenians killed Socrates and rejected Plato. Finally the strong men, Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, put an end to the ensuing chaos. Likewise the Jewish leaders of the Prophet Zephaniah's day were really relativists, or even nihilists, holding that "the Lord does neither good nor bad."<sup>51</sup> As a result the state disintegrated, and failing to heed the voice of the prophets, perished. Moreover, Hitler arose in Germany and found it easy to impose his will on a people that floundered in relativities.<sup>52</sup> There is really no greater danger to modern civilization than this doctrine of relativism which dominates so many of our scientists, especially our sociologists. However, in the Christian Church a wise Providence seems to have provided a beacon to warn men of the danger. The church has no more important mission in our confused world than to point men to the great absolutes.

Sixth, closely related to what has already been said, the church is our chief bulwark against tyranny. Along with relativism, another danger is the threat of totalitarianism, the regimentation of all phases of life by the all-powerful

<sup>50</sup> *The Republic of Plato*, Book I, 336-41, pp. 15-21.

<sup>51</sup> Zeph. 1:12.

<sup>52</sup> For the dangers of relativism, see D. E. Trueblood, *The Predicament of Modern Man*, pp. 1-66.

state. Time and again through history one recalls how courageous prophets and church leaders have resisted "enthroned wrong." Even Gibbon testifies to the courage of many Christian bishops in standing bravely for justice and the rights of humanity against wicked rulers.<sup>53</sup> No incident in all the history of the church, after the first heroic century, is more glorious than the way the noble archbishop Ambrose brought Theodosius, the powerful emperor, to his knees in humble repentance for his horrible massacre of the people of Thessalonica.<sup>54</sup> This heroic disposition of the church at its best has been exemplified abundantly in our own day by the resistance offered to Hitler, not only in countries such as Norway, Denmark, Holland, and France, but within Germany itself. It is probably safe to say that no group within Germany gave Hitler more trouble than a small but courageous group of men within both the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches.

We cannot dismiss the Christian Church so lightly as many of our contemporaries have done. Its contributions in the past have been too great, and it is indispensable as far as the present and the future are concerned. Within the ocean of history its healing waters continue to flow, not unlike a mighty Gulf Stream. There is really, aside from the Christ himself, no greater and more evident instrument of Providence in history than the Christian Church.

After we listen to all the familiar criticisms of the church, including its provincialism, the hypocrisy of its members, the self-centeredness of its leaders, and after we have agreed with all these criticisms, we may still find it reasonable to believe that the church is the only foundation on which our tottering civilization can be restored. It is the stone that our mod-

<sup>53</sup> Gibbon, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 667-68.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 35-37.



ern builders have rejected, but it may actually be the indispensable cornerstone.<sup>55</sup>

However, the church must awaken to this, its supreme opportunity. It must heal its divisions, establish a more adequate system of religious instruction for its youth, encourage bold theological and philosophical speculation, become spiritually alive, and its ministers must once more become living prophets. Moreover, it must be broad enough and vital enough to take in its embrace the best which the other religions and their leaders have contributed to man's spiritual heritage, even as the early church took in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the very best which the Greek and Roman civilizations could offer. Only if it does these things will it indeed become an effective instrument of God in our day, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, to lead mankind on in this perilous and costly yet magnificent adventure.

#### METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this survey of the signs of purpose in history, at least five signs have been discovered. First of all there is the creative advance toward unity and world order. This marked and ponderous tendency has been traced from the primeval chaos through the various stages of physical, social, and political evolution down to the present day when one world through a revitalized and strengthened United Nations looms on the horizon as a real possibility. Certainly such a major tendency toward unity and world order, continued through the vast ages with increasingly better results, seems to be an evidence of purpose, and if of purpose, then there must be a Cosmic Mind, a God. It is so great, so real, so

<sup>55</sup> D. Elton Trueblood, *The Predicament of Modern Man* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), p. 83. Used by permission.

characteristic and fundamental an aspect of the cosmos that it cannot but have the profoundest metaphysical implications, and these implications point to theism.

Then, as a second sign of purpose, there is the increase and growth of values. If the first, the advance toward unity and order, is a sign of purpose and of mind, then this, the second, is not only an evidence of mind and of purpose but also an indication of a benevolent purpose in terms of a concern for a more abundant life for man. Hence the Cosmic Mind seems to be good. Moreover, this idea is further strengthened by the third, fourth, and fifth signs of purpose, namely, the power of ideals and idealists, the evidence of moral law and judgment, and finally Providence in terms of "the cunning of reason," of great and good enterprises developing out of unpromising beginnings, saviors, and, last but not least, the existence of saving institutions among which the Christian Church looms large.

The picture, then, does not look as dark as it did at the end of the last chapter. If there are dark, irrational factors in history, there are also signs of purpose and values, and the latter, on the whole, seem to be the most significant, characteristic, and fundamental. For while the good is always rational and creative, evil is always, in the end, irrational and destructive. One can envisage an absolutely good society, but no absolutely bad society. The testimony of history, in fact, seems to be that the good is gradually increasing and advancing. In the long run it seems to gain the upper hand. It would seem, then, that the outcome of our speculations will be some form of theism, but before this ultimate question can be satisfactorily decided, both good and evil must be seen together as elements of the total picture, and this leads us to the fifth clue which will be considered in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### THE FIFTH CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS PERSPECTIVE AND SYNOPSIS

#### PERSPECTIVE

The writer recalls hearing a minister, some twenty years ago, tell a group of young people of a man who read his newspaper religiously every day in order to see what God was doing in His world. That statement made a strong impression at the time. Now, however, it seems rather flat, hollow, insipid, not only because the press is largely given to the sensational, to merely glittering details, and is lacking in interpretative insight, but also because it is exceedingly difficult to detect much of the ultimate meaning of history on the small scale of every day's blinding snow of events. It is too small a sample of the vast whole.

There are times, in fact, when one, after looking at the events of the day as reflected in the newspaper, is likely to feel that the world is the result of mere chance, or the work of a Demon, or at best is the handiwork of an absentee God. This was especially true during the hectic days of the war when the front pages of newspapers carried little else except tales of the hideous bombing of cities mingled with outcries of hatred and revenge. Thus, from the short view of every day's events, history often seems little more than an impossible tangle of lines and blotches, a crazy puzzle no one can put together, a weird witch's dance of rapid-fire events without rhyme or reason.

However, it must be remembered that history is not unlike certain pictures painted by artists. If viewed at too close range, they appear as nothing but a tangle of lines and blotches. It is only as one steps back far enough and sees the whole that the true meaning can be seen and appreciated. Again, history may be compared to a great mountain. If one stands too near its base and looks up, since so much is hidden it cannot be fully seen and appreciated. It is only as one takes his stand far back, perhaps as much as twenty miles, that he can see the mountain in all its grandeur and majesty.

Likewise, if one is to appreciate the meaning and significance of history, one cannot possibly do so at too close range. The secret of grasping the true meaning of history is perspective. From the short range of one day, or a century, or even a thousand years, one finds oneself in the position of the blind men who went to see the elephant. In other words, from such a short range one sees altogether too little of the phenomenon to be in a position to pass judgment. Viewed only from a certain limited aspect or plane, history indeed appears as nothing more than "races arising, migrating, warring, enslaving one another; nations coming to consciousness, struggling for power, lapsing into decay; great disasters, . . . abortive struggles for liberty . . . war dominating all, with its damnable cruelties and horrors." <sup>1</sup>

Perspective is the key that unlocks the secret of history. If one looks at history as a whole, like the picture and like the mountain, it does seem to have a pattern. In the preceding discussion, especially in Chapters 3, 4, and 6, due consideration was given to perspective. An attempt was

<sup>1</sup> John Wright Buckham, *The Humanity of God* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928), pp. 157-58. Used by permission.

made to look at the process as a whole. Thus the discussion began, not with the state of affairs six thousand years ago, but rather ten billion years ago when the process probably started. Moreover, not only did we trace the process itself from its dim beginnings to the present day, but with the aid of astronomy an attempt was also made to look into the future. This method of viewing history in the large is justified because in so doing our conclusions are based not on a few facts drawn from a short perspective but on a vast mass of significant facts and trends and tendencies. Thus with such a comprehensive basis and background, our conclusions are more likely to be true than if we based them upon a far more limited range of facts.

It may, of course, be contended that it is hazardous to draw conclusions concerning the ultimate nature and meaning of a process until it is finished, and there certainly is some truth in this argument. This, however, is really a form of the positivistic objection which has been dealt with repeatedly, and therefore our answer at this stage of the venture can be brief. First, it may be freely granted that absolutely certain knowledge as to the ultimate meaning of the historical process is impossible. The very best knowledge obtainable is, in short, the most reasonable probability in the light of all the significant facts; and it can also be pointed out that not only in metaphysics but also in life, probability is our guide. In fact, in the very beginning of Chapter 3 it was made clear that the only absolutely certain knowledge which we mortals at any time possess is limited to an awareness of a certain state of consciousness. Then, in the second place, history did not begin yesterday. It would seem that it has continued long enough and has flowered and produced significantly enough to enable us to reach certain reasonable conclusions concerning its ulti-



mate meaning. In other words, this procedure is a good risk as most of the greatest philosophers of history have believed and as our results in the preceding chapters have revealed.

### SYNOPSIS

Closely related to the need of perspective for the understanding of the probable ultimate meaning of history is the necessity of synopsis. Synopsis means seeing things together in terms of their relations. Thus one can see how closely the two are related. The only real difference is a matter of emphasis. Perspective denotes looking at the process as a whole from some adequate vantage point. Synopsis emphasizes the relation between parts and aspects and always follows a preliminary analysis. It involves the putting of the parts of the puzzle together after the analysis.

Now it must be granted that in the process of trying to understand anything, analysis has an important part to play. In order to fully understand a watch, it must be taken apart and the structure and function of each part must be studied separately. The same applies to a study of the human body. Much can be learned from a study of the various organs and parts, even to nerve endings and individual cells. Likewise, psychology can learn much concerning the human mind by reducing it to its various processes and aspects, such as sensation, reasoning, memory, imagination, the nature and effect of subconscious impulses, and also by investigating the relation of these processes to the structure and function of the nervous system. Again, physics can discover much about the nature of matter by analyzing it into elements, molecules, atoms, electrons and protons, and finally into energy.

However, while analysis may yield us much information and may help us to understand the nature of things, yet

analysis alone is not enough. It cannot possibly give us the kind of knowledge we must have in order to really understand anything, and, in fact, in order to live rationally at all. Analysis is really a process of picking things to pieces, and if one relies on it alone, the more one analyzes, the less real knowledge one will obtain. In the case of the clock, one may take it apart, isolate its various wheels, springs, and other mechanisms, and these in turn may be analyzed into their parts, the parts in terms of the metals of which they are made, the metals into molecules, the molecules into atoms, the atoms, in turn, into electrons and protons and energy. But in the meantime, where is the clock? The same thing will apply in the case of the human body or mind. In short, the analytic method, if relied upon exclusively, leads us away from reality rather than toward reality. As du Noüy very aptly puts the whole matter:

The more deeply man analyzes, the farther away he gets from the principal problem which he meant to solve. He loses sight of it and is absolutely incapable of rejoining it by means of the phenomena which he studies, although, logically, he feels that there should be a link between them.<sup>2</sup>

Analysis alone cannot lead us to truth, because reality is made up of organized wholes. Energy is organized into electrons and protons, these in turn into atoms, atoms into molecules, molecules into the ninety-six basic elements, and the various compounds and mixtures, and these in turn into the various objects and bodies which constitute the physical universe. Likewise, the mind constitutes a unity and can only be understood as a unity. Moreover, in the thinking process, thoughts are always wholes. Rationality and comprehension always involve a grasping of wholes.

<sup>2</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), pp. 18-19. Used by permission.

The Gestalt, as well as the personalistic psychology, has given the much needed emphasis to this important fact.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, history cannot be understood in terms of analysis alone. There are no events which occur in absolute isolation from all preceding events and which cannot be related to succeeding events. The very fact that the term history can be applied to the whole mass of events signifies that in some sense they are related, that is, capable of being subsumed under one certain concept or universal. Toynbee discovered that in trying to understand history it is impossible even to consider such large units as nations as isolated and wholly independent factors. The smallest units that he could make use of as a historian and philosopher were nothing less than whole civilizations.<sup>4</sup> Again, Toynbee is perfectly aware of the fact that even civilizations do not exist as isolated phenomena. He stresses the fact that throughout history there have been encounters between civilizations. He even envisages the time when out of the welter of various existing civilizations there will emerge one great world civilization, better than anything previous because it will embrace the very best in all that has gone before.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a penetrating discussion of the self as a whole, see E. S. Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, pp. 202-211.

<sup>4</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 222-24.

<sup>5</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-16. Both Collingwood and Niebuhr criticize Toynbee for breaking up the unity of history into discrete civilizations. See R. C. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 163-64; and R. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, p. 110. But Toynbee is merely recognizing a fact. One does not have to agree with his special listing of civilizations in all its details to see that to begin with there is little real unity in history. The unity of history is not at all apparent at the beginning; cultures are most diverse at the primitive levels when the various groups are most isolated. As man becomes civilized, however, and after the various civilizations come in contact, they learn from each other and the process of developing a common world culture begins. This is especially possible today, since for the first time all civilizations are in contact with one another. Thus the unity of history is a developing process.

Reinhold Niebuhr scorns all rationalistic and empirical attempts to find unity in history. He holds that there is unity in history, but it can only become evident to the man of faith as he reflects on the great events as set forth in the Bible.<sup>6</sup> He is right, of course, in insisting that the idea of the unity of mankind was first fully developed by the writers of the Old Testament; but this does not mean that it is impossible to find any really convincing evidences of unity by means of reason and empirical investigation. In fact, Haas has shown that this idea of the unity of mankind and of history was conceived not only by the Hebrews but also by the Persians and even by the Greeks. Moreover, among the Greeks it was conceived as fundamentally a community of reason.<sup>7</sup> However, the best answer to Niebuhr is the evidence of the creative advance toward unity and order which was presented in the last chapter. In short, there is real unity in history, but it is a slowly developing unity. It is a unity that increases as reason and goodness increasingly master the chaos of unreason and evil.

Many philosophers of history today, as Haas has pointed out, do not take the unity of mankind and of history seriously.<sup>8</sup> This is largely due to the fact that they have become victims of the method of analysis. The very greatest philosophers of history, the Prophets of Israel, St. Augustine, Hegel, and today Toynbee, take the unity of mankind and of history seriously. For Hegel truth is really one, and with this guiding principle he thought in terms of history as one great universal process. As a result, he advanced from less to more and more, instead of from more to less and less, like

<sup>6</sup> Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-10.

<sup>7</sup> W. S. Haas, "The March of Philosophy of History and Its Crucial Problem Today," *Philosophical Review*, LVIII, No. 2 (March, 1949), 101-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

many of our contemporary thinkers. The time may well be at hand when the barrenness of mere analysis will become so evident that the cry will be: "Back to Hegel."

### THE DILEMMA OF HISTORY

History, then, must be seen as a whole, and the synoptic method must be applied in order to see the various parts and aspects in their true relationship. Only then can any confident conclusions be drawn as to its ultimate meaning and nature. The three preceding chapters have, however, revealed a strange dualism in history. On the one hand there are the dark, irrational facts. These are prevalent enough to force us to the conclusion that they are more than mere surface phenomena. In some way they constitute a clue, they reveal an aspect of the ultimately real, and considered alone they would drive every rational mind to some form of atheism.

Then, on the other hand, there are the teleological facts as set forth in Chapters 3, 4, and especially Chapter 6. Considered alone, they would certainly lead us to some type of theism; but they cannot be considered alone if we are to be truly objective. History is never a question of good or evil, but always of good and evil. Full justice must therefore be done to both. They must be seen together, and we must draw our conclusions with our eyes on both. The dilemma of history, in other words, consists just in this fact of dualism, of good and evil.<sup>9</sup>

In short, in order to resolve this strange dilemma, both perspective and synopsis are necessary. We must look again at the whole process, but this time both the good and the

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent discussion of good and evil, see E. S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 240-75.



evil must be seen together. This leads us to the two ultimate or final clues toward which these two sets of facts, when viewed in perspective and synoptically, seem to point. The next two chapters will deal with these two ultimate and final clues.

PART III

THE TWO ULTIMATE CLUES



## Chapter 8

### THE SIXTH CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS A LIMITED GOD AS ULTIMATE CAUSE

#### THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY AGAIN

At the very beginning of this venture, in Chapter 1, the question of the problem of history confronted us. There it became evident that the problem of history, at least for the philosopher, is chiefly metaphysical. Unlike the historian, the philosopher is concerned with the ultimate meaning of history. Again and again he asks himself: Why this strange drama? What started it in the first place, and what keeps it going? Is it all a matter of accident, or is it the result of plan and purpose and in some sense a manifestation of God?

Since first raising this fundamental question in Chapter 1, some progress toward an answer has been made. Perhaps it is well to pause for a moment and to look back over the long road which has been traveled. This may help us with the difficult task which must be accomplished before the journey's end. It may help us to find other and more ultimate clues which may lead us toward a reasonable solution of the problem of history.

After raising the question of the problem of history in Chapter 1, and assuring ourselves that a metaphysics of history is at least a possibility, in Chapter 2, for the sake of perspective, an analysis was made of the six chief points of view: the early Hebrew or prophetic types, the positivistic types, the apocalyptic types, the fatalistic types, the illusionistic types, and the evolutionary types. Moreover, the apoc-

alyptic was found to consist of three rather marked types: the traditional, the Barthian, and the Marxian communist; and the evolutionary of two, the naturalistic and the teleological or theistic.

With Chapter 3 the actual task of considering the clues was begun. The conviction of many, among them some of the greatest philosophers of history, that history seems to be a manifestation of the ultimate, was taken as the first clue. The critical examination which followed justified this conviction. It became evident that history, not only seems, but actually must be, in some sense, a manifestation of the ultimate and therefore capable of shedding light on its nature and purpose. It also became evident that time must be an attribute of the ultimate. Finally it became clear that since time has value and meaning only for personality, and is, in fact, a fundamental attribute of personality, that therefore there is reason to suppose that the ultimate may be a mind and hence personal. Thus even the first clue seemed to point in the direction of theism.

Since man is the chief actor on the stage of history, without whom, in fact, there could be no really significant history, it became clear in Chapter 4 that a metaphysical investigation of history involves a consideration of man. Hence, we took, history demands consideration of man, as the second clue. In our discussion of man, however, a peculiar contradiction began to appear in terms of man's higher and lower nature. Man, it became evident, is neither wholly good nor wholly bad but a curious mixture of the two. This strange dualism must have metaphysical implications; it must tell us something of the nature of reality. Yet while his higher nature points toward theism, his lower nature points toward some form of naturalism or fatalism. However it did seem that, on the whole, man's higher nature



provides the more fundamental insight into the nature of reality. For not only do the higher capacities seem to be the goal of the process of evolution, but also in the mind of man we found the only real and adequate explanation of such perplexing puzzles as change and permanence and the one and the many.

In Chapter 5 a serious attempt was made to look at the dark side of history. That history demands consideration of irrational factors was taken as the third clue, and the consequent investigation proved that history certainly abounds in examples. Barbarism and inhuman cruelty, the terrific struggle for existence and the senseless waste, perversions, and corruptions, the tragic fate of ideals and idealists, and finally the slowness of evolution and progress—these are real, hard, stubborn facts which cannot be explained away unless one wishes to flee from experience itself. Since they are so real, they must, along with man's lower nature, constitute a revelation of a certain aspect of reality. Considered alone they would lead any discerning mind to naturalism and fatalism.

But if history demands consideration of irrational factors, it also demands consideration of signs of purpose if we are to approach its ultimate secret. This, the fourth clue, was given due consideration in Chapter 6. Here again, as in the case of the higher nature of man, it was clearly seen that the irrational and evil factors are by no means the only facts. History teems with signs of purpose and value which are just as real as the irrational and evil factors and perhaps even more weighty and significant. If one cannot ignore the irrational facts, neither can one ignore the teleological. The creative advance toward unity, the increase and growth of values, the power of ideals and idealists, moral law and judgment, together with signs of providence, finding their

highest expressions through saviors and churches—these are not only stubborn facts, incapable of being ignored, but they are also basic, fundamental, and massive in their effect.

History, then, is neither wholly good nor wholly bad; it constitutes a strange mixture of good and evil. In other words, the problem of history turns out to be the problem of good and evil. Thus history, as it became evident in the last chapter, constitutes a dilemma. To dissolve this dilemma our only hope is the fifth clue: history demands perspective and synopsis. History, as we have seen, does seem to constitute some kind of unity, and it may well be that by looking at the whole picture synoptically that a sixth clue, a clue capable of explaining the apparent dilemma, will appear. One thing is clear—the ultimate secret of history cannot be found by analysis alone, by a mere preoccupation with the historical events. There must be a synoptic vision of the whole. However, before seeking this vision, a critique of the chief historical solutions becomes necessary.

### A CRITIQUE OF THE CHIEF HISTORICAL SOLUTIONS

It is evident from the discussion in Chapter 2 that the philosophy of history, in the real sense of the word, had its beginnings with the authors of the J and E documents and with the great Prophets of Israel who followed in their wake. These men were the pioneers, the trail blazers who made the way and laid the foundation for all the chief teleological interpretations which were to follow. Such ideas as the unity of history, moral law and order in history, and history as the theater of Divine operations and purpose go back to them.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, being realists as well as idealists,

<sup>1</sup> For an appreciative account of the prophetic contributions to the philosophy of history, see R. Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, pp. 102-7. Aside from certain Neo-Orthodox preconceptions, this is an excellent statement.

they clearly saw the influence of evil in history. While holding on to an ultimate optimism, most of them were pessimistic so far as the immediate situation was concerned.

Nevertheless, being pioneers and appearing so long ago, it is not surprising that their total view of history contains defects which make it inadequate for our own day. For one thing, they were not critical enough. While critical of the traditional Hebrew religion from the standpoint of ethics, for which we must forever remain their debtors, yet, following the general pattern set down by J and E, they tended to accept other aspects of their tradition without much question. They lacked the modern historian's precision and regard for accuracy. Again, they lacked the long perspective which our wider knowledge has made possible for the modern philosopher of history, and such ideas as evolution and progress in the full modern sense did not once enter their minds. As a result, they expected things to happen too quickly at times and too much according to a somewhat arbitrary, preconceived pattern.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, J's account of the creation of man and the origin of evil cannot possibly be accepted by the modern mind. The same thing is true of the prophetic solution of the problem of evil as punishment for sin.<sup>3</sup> In short, while we must be grateful to J and E and the Prophets who followed them for their great insights, their total view of history is impossible for the modern mind. We must stand upon their shoulders and do our best to see farther.

The second attempt at a philosophy of history is the older form of apocalypticism. The truth in it is that it is

<sup>2</sup> For some of the limitations of the Prophets, see J. M. P. Smith, *The Prophet and His Problems*, pp. 102-8; *The Prophets and Their Times*, p. 320; and J. Paterson, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, pp. 2-3, 6.

<sup>3</sup> See H. E. Fosdick's interesting comment in *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 159-60.

teleological, though not in the evolutionary or developmental sense. History is not the result of chance, but is essentially a Divine Drama. The basic teleology contained in the wineskins of these old apocalyptic thought forms is coherent with the vast, massive array of teleological facts. And as expressed so magnificently in St. Augustine's *City of God*, apocalypticism has had a tremendous influence. Nevertheless it is unacceptable to the modern mind. The actual processes of history,<sup>4</sup> together with the modern world picture as disclosed by the sciences, have discredited it. Again, it has served to retard social progress. Why do anything to relieve economic distress and to prevent war if things are going from bad to worse until the Lord returns to straighten things out? Why not let the Lord do it? One of the chief reasons why large sections of the Christian Church have not responded more vigorously to the challenge of the present world crisis is because of the lingering ghost of this old theory.

Barthianism and the Neo-Orthodox movement, as belated attempts at a revival of apocalypticism, also contain truth. These have proved a wholesome corrective to humanism and to certain shallow types of optimism based upon an unrealistic view of human nature and on the exploded idea of inevitable progress. They have certain basic weaknesses, however, which make them unsatisfactory as philosophies of history. Since these movements are extremely influential in Europe and also among certain groups in America, it behooves us to look at some of these weaknesses.

First, though claiming to be apocalyptic, Barth, in particular, is extremely vague in his exposition of the idea. For

<sup>4</sup> That is time after time the Messiah's return has been predicted, but these hopes have always been disappointed. Even in New Testament times, there were those who doubted; see II Peter 3:3-4.

example, a critical examination of his sermon, "There Shall Be Signs,"<sup>5</sup> leaves one wondering what he really means. Second, while Barthians and Neo-Orthodox thinkers recognize the fact of evil and the irrational factors in history as few other theists do, yet one looks in vain for an adequate explanation of why these factors should exist and why in such abundance. Thus Niebuhr clearly recognizes the conflict between good and evil upon the stage of history.<sup>6</sup> He even recognizes the existence of natural evil as a necessity which man does not originate and over which he does not have complete control.<sup>7</sup> But one looks in vain for a satisfactory solution. Aside from blaming man far beyond his due, Niebuhr lightly dismisses natural evil by a mere statement to the effect that it is the result of nature's failure to fit human purposes perfectly. He even seems to imply that, after all, natural evils are not of great concern to the Christian faith.<sup>8</sup> This is far from a satisfactory explanation of the unspeakable woes which inflict humanity, as disclosed by our third clue. Any philosophy of history which cannot give better reasons for the existence of the irrational factors stands condemned. There is also, of course, the endeavor to show that in the total scheme of things natural evil is of little consequence because time is of little significance as over against eternity. But this argument breaks decisively on the stubborn fact of the reality of time, a fact which was duly stressed in our consideration of the first clue.

A third weakness of these systems is their disregard of the place and function of reason in the philosophy of history. Thus in his latest book, *Faith and History*, Niebuhr insists

<sup>5</sup> In K. Barth and E. Thurneysen, *God's Search for Man*, pp. 143-57.

<sup>6</sup> See Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18, 120.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.



that history can only be rightly understood by a prior act of faith. If by faith Niebuhr meant that even at its best, in terms of coherence and synopsis, reason alone is not sufficient but that it always requires a measure of trust, no cause for quarrel would exist. Reason and faith are necessary to one another and must not be sundered. Faith without reason is as impossible as reason without faith. But Niebuhr does not understand faith in these terms. For him it is a Divine gift of grace which is beyond human understanding.<sup>9</sup> Hence he lays himself open to the charge that only the elect can rightly understand history; he seems to say, in fact, that the Christian view of history is not defensible in any way that will appeal to the common reason. The result can only be skepticism. Niebuhr does not take seriously enough the fourth clue, the powerful effect of the teleological facts when marshaled and viewed together. Closely related is his tendency to reduce reason too much to analysis rather than to regard it in the highest sense as synopsis after the manner of Plato and Hegel. Finally, the Barthians and the Neo-Orthodox group are altogether too pessimistic. It is one thing to puncture the illusion of inevitable progress, but it is quite another to cast aspersions upon the fact and the possibility of progress.<sup>10</sup> This is to blast our hopes and to cut the nerve of endeavor. In fact, Barth would leave the social problem in the hands of God; it is God's responsibility, not man's. How can he escape the charge of quietism?<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See, especially, Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-48.

<sup>10</sup> Niebuhr's mundane pessimism is not clearly so great as that of Barth; for his eschatology, see *op. cit.*, pp. 235-43.

<sup>11</sup> See Barth's address before the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches, entitled "No Christian Marshall Plan," *Christian Century*, December 8, 1948, pp. 1330-33.

Communism, this belligerent modern form of apocalypticism, also contains certain truths, mostly borrowed from Judaism and Christianity. Chief among these are its belief in the importance of history, its insistence on justice for the exploited poor, and its emphasis on brotherhood in terms of racial equality. To these must also be added its own particular contribution, namely, a serious attempt to apply reason to economic processes in terms of a planned economy. Its first and greatest weakness is its naturalistic or materialistic interpretation of history. It fails to do justice, especially to the second and fourth clues. In fact, its atheism constitutes something of a paradox which it has not been able to resolve. On the one hand, it overemphasizes economic forces as the really creative and determining agents in history, but, on the other hand, it recognizes the creative power of the human mind. On the one hand, it insists that all ideals are relative and it recognizes no absolutes, but on the other hand it makes feverish appeals to such ideals as justice and loyalty, as though they were absolute. Again, on the basis of an obsolete mechanistic view of the universe and its experience with one rather poor representative of religion, it condemns all religion as "the opiate of the people"; but after a rather strenuous and persistent effort to destroy religion, it finds it necessary to compromise with it as did the Roman Empire.

The second great weakness of communism is that it tries to build an optimistic social philosophy on a naturalistic metaphysics and a very unrealistic view of man. Utopia, in terms of the gradual disappearance of the state, hardly commends itself to sober minds. Third, it lacks proper respect for the value and dignity of man as an individual, as disclosed by our second clue. There can be no doubt that

communism as it exists in Russia today means dictatorship, regimentation, and the suppression of basic human freedoms. Moreover, like fascistic capitalism, there is its proneness to appeal to hatred and violence and to the doctrine that the end justifies the means. Finally, it is extremely dogmatic, authoritarian, and possessed of a pharisaical self-righteousness. It is as dogmatic in the affirmation of its atheism as fundamentalism is in the affirmation of its particular brand of theism. No communist thinker has given serious consideration to the theistic implications of the first, second, and fourth clues. Moreover, like the fanatic devotee of American capitalism, the Communist cannot endure criticism. The Communist is always right; his is an absolute which none dare question. It is because of these basic weaknesses, then, that communism cannot be accepted as an adequate philosophy of history. An adequate philosophy of history must, above all else, be truly synoptic. Communism has never been truly synoptic; it tends to view everything altogether too much from the lower levels of physical wants and the clash of economic forces as the only real determining power in history.

Fatalism, the third, historic answer to the problem of history, also contains truth. First of all, in the light of the lower nature of man, according to the second clue, and in the light of the third clue, the irrational factors, no one can doubt that there is an element and a measure of necessity in history. Freedom may be the goal of history, as Hegel insisted, but so far it has been attained only in a measure and mostly in favored spots. Human life is, for the most part, still largely determined by impersonal processes over which the individual has little control. Moreover, as Toynbee points out, thus far at least in history there has been no escape from the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death

for civilizations as well as for individuals.<sup>12</sup> Even our own civilization may go down. There is truth in Spengler; he cannot be lightly dismissed. There may even be a grain of truth in the old Greek idea that even Zeus is in some respects subject to Necessity. It may well be that not only history, but also the Author of history, in undertaking this tremendous venture, may have to conform to determining conditions which He can transform into freedom only after a long process of creative effort, struggle, and pain; a process which may reach beyond this earth for its ultimate fulfilment in eternity. The second great truth in fatalism stems from the first, namely, that history is tragic. However one may interpret this tragic element in history, its presence, as evidenced especially by the third clue, cannot be denied. Even those who may try to reduce it to mere illusion must still explain why these tragic illusions arise.

Fatalism, however, like apocalypticism, has its logical weaknesses and inadequacies. First of all, it is vague so far as first principles are concerned. To expose this basic weakness one has only to raise the question: What is this blind Fate which is supposed to order and determine history? Spengler, the greatest modern exponent of fatalism, leaves us in the dark when it comes to the nature of Fate, and he justly deserves Toynbee's criticism at this point.<sup>13</sup> Fate, in fact, stands for everything from an impersonal system of natural law to *kismet*, the inscrutable will of Allah. Fate, of course, always implies necessity, but it is at the point of the nature of this necessity that fatalists are vague.

Then, in the second place, fatalism ignores certain great facts, as disclosed especially by the second and fourth clues. The first of these is the fact of human freedom as a creative

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

factor in history. History shows that men can really influence and even direct the course as well as the character of many events.<sup>14</sup> The second is the fact that while necessity plays a part in history, novelty and contingency and purpose also have a part to play. Fatalism dogmatically assumes that the future will be just as the past—dreary, mechanical repetitions of the cycle. This is flying in the face of the facts disclosed especially by the fourth clue, the emergence of novelties in the evolutionary process, seemingly as the result of Cosmic Purpose. Moreover, when fatalism insists that the future will be nothing more than cyclic repetition, it is assuming a knowledge of the future which no mortal possesses. The 1948 presidential elections in the United States serve as a reminder that there are contingent factors in history which even the experts cannot discern. Again, as Toynbee has pointed out, that all other civilizations have followed the general cycle of birth, growth, maturity, decay, and death is no sign that ours must of necessity meet the same tragic end. It may be successful where all the others have failed, because “our future largely depends upon ourselves,” not on our stars or Fate.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, as the name suggests, fatalism is the most extreme form of pessimism possible. It finds some justification, of course, in the light of a certain aspect of the second clue, the lower nature of man, and in the light of the third clue; but fatalism does not do justice to the first, the chief aspect of the second, the fourth, and the fifth clues. The teleological facts, the personalistic and teleological nature of time, the higher nature of man, together with all the signs of purpose which appear in the drama of history, are

<sup>14</sup> For illustrations of how man can change history, see Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 41. Used by permission.



so weighty and massive that in the end, when the total picture is considered, the ultrapessimism which fatalism represents appears highly improbable. The chief sin is the lack of synopsis. Fatalism wears dark glasses. It fails to see the brighter side, or, seeing it, fails to give it due consideration. It undermines our hopes and cuts the nerve of creative endeavor. Where there is no hope men cease striving creatively and begin to drift to their doom. For when men feel that everything is fixed, that what is to be, will be, regardless of their feverish efforts, they will throw up their hands in despair. Fatalism, then, is wholly inadequate as a philosophy of history both from the rational and from the pragmatic standpoint. Its very light is darkness.

The fourth, the illusionistic, also has its grain of truth. It causes men to realize that this present world is not ultimate, the final reality, as naturalism would have them believe. It is constantly changing and someday will pass away. But underlying the phenomenal world of appearances there must be something more real, permanent, and abiding as its ground and cause.

Nevertheless, in spite of containing these measures of truth, illusionism suffers from three serious weaknesses. First and foremost, it does not take time seriously enough. It tends to brush aside rather lightly our immediate perception of time and our awareness of the importance of life and of history. Hence it shatters decisively on facts brought to light relative to the metaphysical validity of time in our discussion of the first clue. Second, in its extreme forms, it holds that the only ultimately real is a static, motionless, colorless, valueless absolute. How motion, concrete events, values, especially moral values with the human awareness of a real distinction between good and evil, and finally, how personalities, as distinct centers of self-consciousness, can

arise out of a static, motionless, colorless, valueless absolute is a question which the illusionist would find it very difficult to answer. Third, from the practical standpoint, illusionism can give men no basis for courage and strength to face the crises of life and of history. Why bother if the present world and the events of history are mere appearances or illusions, and if personalities and values are little more than ephemeral shadows that will soon pass away forever? Hence, illusionism must also be rejected on both rational and pragmatic grounds.

The fifth, the positivistic, has made at least two very important contributions to the philosophy of history. First, it has applied the scientific method to the study of human society. This in turn has brought two benefits, namely, a better understanding of human society and the processes of history, and the increase of man's ability to control these processes and thus the possibility of achieving a greater freedom. Second, positivism has taught the philosopher to be humble rather than dogmatic when dealing with the ultimate secret of history. The great basic weakness of this point of view was made clear in Chapter 1, namely, its dogmatic denial of the possibility of metaphysics. It is basically a form of agnosticism. While it pretends to take the fifth clue seriously in attempting to look at all the facts, both good and evil, yet it fails in the end because it is altogether too easily overwhelmed by the complexity of things and is too easygoing. It is altogether too content to rest in the dilemma of history, which should serve as a stimulus to the mind to further inquiry rather than as a last resting place. Positivism lacks the courage and the daring which inspires great speculative ventures. In philosophy, as in life, nothing is gained without a measure of risk. Moreover, positivism does not give enough consideration to the real weight of the

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teleological facts as embodied in the first, second, and fourth clues. In fact, in our day, it tends to become more and more preoccupied with the trivial. This is always the fate of those who lack the nerve to make great ventures. While recognizing, then, the contributions of positivism, yet, in the final analysis, because of these serious weaknesses, it too must be labeled as found wanting.

The sixth general type, the evolutionary, has also made significant contributions. In the first place, it emphasizes the fact that history is a process, a movement, and hence not static but dynamic. Second, it fully recognizes the importance of time, and hence the importance of the historical process. Third, basing itself upon the theory of evolution, it insists that there has been real progress. History is not just moving, but it is moving in a direction that is full of hope and possibility for mankind. Fourth, like positivism, and over against fatalism, it insists that man can, to a great and, in fact, increasing extent, determine his fate at least in this present world. Science has placed the means in his hands if he will only use them rightly and constructively.

There was a time when evolutionists believed in the theory of inevitable progress.<sup>16</sup> Today that theory is no longer tenable. While it is still possible to hold, over against fatalism, that man can to a great extent determine his own destiny, it is impossible any longer to believe that progress will continue regardless of what man may do. As a matter of fact, man today has within his hands the means of destroying civilization. In other words, two tragic world wars and the possibility of a third have knocked the theory of inevitable progress into a cocked hat. Moreover, in the light of the second, third, and fourth clues, we can truly see how slow and costly progress has really been. As a result of

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 2, pages 50-53, 61-62.

these facts, those who hold the evolutionary view of history have become more realistic and sober. They still believe in progress and the possibility of indefinite advance in the long future that is possible for the race, as over against the pessimistic Barthians and Neo-Orthodox, but they no longer hold to the old theory of inevitable progress. Thus the evolutionary view opens larger vistas of hope than any other philosophy of history.

In Chapter 2 it became evident that there are really two basic forms of the evolutionary philosophy of history. The first is the naturalistic or atheistic, the view that there is no God, at least in the sense of a great Mind and Will as the ultimate Cause, but rather that nature is ultimate, and natural forces the final arbiters of history and of destiny. Naturalism, as was pointed out in Chapter 2, has made two really important contributions to the philosophy of history: its emphasis on the empirical attitude and method, and its emphasis upon man and his values. If Barthianism and Neo-Orthodoxy serve as wholesome correctives to naturalistic humanism, the reverse is just as true. Naturalistic humanism also serves as a wholesome corrective to the excesses of the Crisis Theology. Perhaps the truth lies between these two extremes.

In spite of its contributions, evolutionary naturalism has certain fatal weaknesses which make it untenable as a philosophy of history. First and most fundamental of all, when pressed as to ultimate causes, since it rejects God it has to fall back on such inadequate principles as chance, accident, natural law, or the blind, unconscious forces of nature. To attempt to explain the teleological facts of history as disclosed through the first, second, and fourth clues, in terms of chance or accident, or of natural law, or the blind unconscious forces of nature, is hopelessly impossible. It involves

far more faith and miracle than the theistic explanation. Second, the naturalist sins against the fifth clue: history demands perspective and synopsis. He is usually so pre-occupied with analysis, with details, that he cannot see the forest for the trees. Many naturalists, as well as positivists, insist that history is too complex to be fathomed metaphysically by the limited human mind; and it is interesting to note that Reinhold Niebuhr echoes this same idea.<sup>17</sup> What Niebuhr and the naturalists forget is that they have been applying the wrong method. The trouble is not so much with the human mind; it is capable of mastering vast masses of details in terms of universals. In fact, it does this constantly. Nor is the trouble primarily with history. Vastly complex, as it undoubtedly is, yet through the rational empirical and synoptic approach, it is capable of giving us clues which seem to point in the direction where the ultimate truth seems to lie. Again, it must also be pointed out that most naturalists are not truly synoptic because fastening on the irrational factors, they fail also to give adequate consideration to the teleological factors. It is utterly impossible to arrive anywhere near the ultimate secret of history without a careful consideration of all the facts.

Finally, it seems that it is utterly impossible for the naturalist to escape an ultimate pessimism, fatalism, and despair. In our consideration of the third clue, it became evident that those most likely to be in a position to know tell us, that however long the earth may be able to sustain life, someday it will become lifeless, nothing more than one vast mausoleum. In the final wreckage of the world, the naturalist's dream is shattered forever, since he believes in no God and consequently in no goal of history that finds its ultimate fulfilment beyond history. Some naturalists are

<sup>17</sup> See Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 112.



quite willing to admit that their system signifies an ultimate despair.<sup>18</sup> The best recent statement comes from W. T. Stace in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*. A few pertinent passages will suffice.

We do not live in a universe which is on the side of our values. It is completely indifferent to them.<sup>19</sup>

If the scheme of things is purposeless and meaningless, then the life of man is purposeless and meaningless too. Everything is futile, all effort is in the end worthless. A man may, of course, still pursue disconnected ends, money, fame, art, science, and may gain pleasure from them. But his life is hollow at the center. Hence the dissatisfied, disillusioned, restless, spirit of modern man.<sup>20</sup>

No one any longer effectively believes in moral principles except as the private prejudices either of the individual men or of nations or cultures. This is the inevitable consequence of the doctrine of ethical relativity, which in turn is the inevitable consequence of believing in a purposeless world.<sup>21</sup>

This is nihilism with a vengeance. All naturalists would not go so far as Stace in repudiating ethical ideals. Many certainly believe in values, and often shame theists with their devotion. However, ultimately, any thoroughgoing naturalism can end only in fatalism and despair. Both from the standpoint of reason and practice, then, we cannot accept naturalism as a tenable philosophy of history.

The utter bankruptcy of naturalism causes us to look once more with hope in the direction of theism, that is the teleological, evolutionary interpretation of history. The teleological view of history has three very significant things in its favor. First of all, as has been shown in Chapter 2, the

<sup>18</sup> See B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic, and Other Essays*, pp. 47-48; and J. W. Krutch, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 233-49.

<sup>19</sup> W. T. Stace, "Man Against Darkness," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXXII, No. 3, September, 1948, p. 53. This and the following are used by permission of the publishers.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

majority of the greatest philosophers of history, among them such giants as St. Augustine, Hegel, and today, Toynbee, have all been in some sense teleologists. To these as pioneers in the field, the Prophets of Israel and Zoroaster may also be added.<sup>22</sup> Second, the teleological view of history, in the modern evolutionary sense, is based on a massive array of hard and impressive facts; it is based on the first, second, and fourth clues. Third, the teleological view, more than any other, is capable of giving man a rational basis for hope and morale, since it sees history as the plan and purpose of God and men as God's fellow workers.

The basic weakness of most teleological systems has been their unrealistic optimism. Teleologists, of course, no longer believe that the Kingdom of God can be established on earth at any time soon, or ever, for that matter, in a perfect form. Two tragic world wars, the present dangerous world situation, plus the criticism of keen theological realists, headed by Reinhold Niebuhr, have had a sobering effect. But so far as the philosophy of history is concerned, there have been few attempts at a really coherent treatment of both the rational and the irrational factors.<sup>23</sup> Both Hegel and Toynbee recognize the irrational factors, but it cannot be said that they deal adequately with them; certainly not in the sense of finding some principle of explanation which would account for their existence.

Traditionally, theism, as formulated by its theologians, has been almost altogether absolutistic in its conception of God. That is, God was conceived as omnipotent in the

<sup>22</sup> That is, St. Augustine, the Prophets, and Zoroaster were teleologists in the sense of seeing history as a drama through which the Divine Will manifests itself. They were not teleologists in the evolutionary sense, but like the evolutionary teleologist they saw God's purpose in history.

<sup>23</sup> Dr. E. S. Brightman is one of the few theistic thinkers who deals in any adequate sense with both factors; see especially *A Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 240-75.

sense of being able to perform everything that is reasonable, and in being in no sense hampered by anything either within or outside of His Being. The absolutist, of course, freely grants that God is limited by the free will of man; but since God, in creating man a free moral agent, really willed this limitation, it is considered a case of self-limitation. God had to choose between making man a mere puppet or making him a free being, and He chose the latter with all the entailed consequences. There was no necessity which forced God to create man or anything at all. Creation is an expression of God's freedom as well as His power. In short, the basic thesis of the absolutistic view is that there is nothing within God or external to Him which thwarts or obstructs the full execution of His plan and purpose. In the words of Knudson: "Omnipotence, we say, means that God can do whatever He wills."<sup>24</sup>

Theistic absolutism has two main roots.<sup>25</sup> The first is the Biblical emphasis on God's transcendence and mighty power.<sup>26</sup> The second is philosophical and theological. It can be traced back to Aristotle, but so far as Christian theology is concerned, it found its chief expression in St. Augustine.<sup>27</sup> This Augustinian influence can be traced through the medieval thinkers to John Calvin and from him down to such modern thinkers as Karl Barth. Absolutism is especially congenial to all forms of Calvinism; but while all Calvinists are absolutists, not all absolutists are

<sup>24</sup> Albert C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1930), p. 271. Used by permission.

<sup>25</sup> For brief, scholarly summaries of the history of theistic absolutism, see Knudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-67; and E. S. Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-85.

<sup>26</sup> See Isa. 40; Matt. 19:26; Rev. 19:6-7.

<sup>27</sup> See Augustine, *Confessions*, in C. W. Eliot (ed.), *The Harvard Classics*, Vol. VII, p. 6; and *The City of God*, Book XVII, chap. vii, pp. 193-95.

Calvinists. Perhaps the greatest defender of absolutism in the United States today is the learned theologian Dr. Albert C. Knudson, who stands in the Arminian rather than in the Calvinistic tradition. In fact, if a poll of outstanding theologians were taken, most of them, no doubt, would designate themselves as absolutists.

Since all the other historic answers to the problem of history have proved their inadequacy in the light of the clues, it now behooves us to see if an evolutionary theistic absolutism may succeed where the others have failed. Perhaps the best plan of procedure is to see how it squares with each of the five preliminary clues. In our consideration of the first clue in Chapter 3, it became evident that history must really be a manifestation of the ultimate, since history is fundamentally a temporal process, and since time must have metaphysical significance and meaning. It also became clear that since time is an essential attribute of personality and of all personal experience that the ultimate is probably personal. No difficulties are involved in squaring absolutism with the teleological implications of time, but to attempt to square it with the metaphysical validity of time does create difficulties. Nevertheless, there are theistic absolutists, such as Knudson, who hold that time must be real, that it must have meaning for God, that God acts into time, and that therefore the time process in some way reveals Him.<sup>28</sup> However, in Chapter 3, it became clear that some absolutists, such as Bowne and du Noüy, tend to deny the metaphysical validity of time. This seems to show that there is something in the very nature of absolutism, namely, in its conception of the omnipotence of God, which makes it difficult for the absolutist to admit that time has any ultimate meaning. At any rate, when an absolutist such as

<sup>28</sup> Knudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-84.

Knudson ascribes metaphysical validity to time and tries to take time seriously, it may entail some rather unpleasant consequences later. For if time has any meaning for God, if He acts into time, then God must take His full share of the responsibility for what takes place in time. In short, the easiest way for the absolutist to solve the problem of evil is to deny that time has any real meaning for God. But it has already been shown that this answer is impossible. Thus it would seem that even the first clue reveals certain real difficulties involved in a theistic absolutist interpretation of history.

Since theistic absolutism is teleological, it is certainly in accord with such a significant teleological fact as the higher nature of man, the most important aspect of the second clue. Yet at the most, the higher nature of man only proves that there must be a Cause great enough to account for it; and that this Cause must be a Mind; but it in no way proves the omnipotence of that Mind. Moreover, evidences of man's higher nature appear very late in history, and this capacity develops slowly, rarely if ever appearing in full flower. Nor can all the blame for this slow and incomplete development be placed upon man alone. For while most men could have done better, myriads of them, since the dawn of history, through no fault of their own, have really never had a fighting chance. Many have been frustrated and hampered by forces and processes beyond their control. It would seem that an omnipotent God who is interested in time and acts in time could have given man a better chance, even within time. If He is really interested in the moral and spiritual development of man, in which a very few succeed marvelously while many others who try hard fail, why has He made moral and spiritual attainment so very difficult?



Then there are the negative aspects of the second clue, man's lowly animal origin and his consequent lower nature. No longer being able to blame the Devil or old father Adam, the thoughtful absolutist is forced to admit that God must in some way be responsible for man's lower nature, including his strong tendencies toward sin and evil. Some, indeed, seek a way of escape by blaming man himself, that is, his abuse of his freedom. There is much truth in this, of course. Much evil is due to sin, man's deliberate choice of the lower way, when he might have taken the higher way. Nevertheless man is not the author of his own lower nature and animal impulses. They are given to him. As a creature also gifted with reason and with a conscience and freedom, he must control his impulses; but to most men, their lower nature is a real problem, and, in fact, the greatest handicap to real freedom. Only the greatest saints have escaped its thrall, often at a tremendous cost and only after a terrific struggle. There are resources, spiritual resources, to aid men in the struggle, but these have not been sufficiently available to all men. Especially is this true of the countless billions who have had to live without the insight and help which the higher religions can give.

Then there is the third clue, the actual, concrete expressions of evil in so many forms upon the stage of history. First, there are the facts of barbarism and inhuman cruelty. That these are not only inherent within man himself but somehow inherent in the very nature of the process which produces man, is evident from two facts. On the one hand, man is forced on and upward toward civilization as an inevitable and necessary expression of his higher nature as man. But on the other hand, up to modern times at least as we have seen, civilizations, these inevitable and necessary expressions of man's higher nature, can only rise upon the

backs of slaves and the whitened bones of the slain, that is, upon human exploitation. Moreover it is strange that an omnipotent God would allow inhuman, bloodthirsty leaders such as Genghis Khan, Attila, Tamerlane, Napoleon, and Hitler to arise. It would seem that an omnipotent God, unrestrained by Necessity, would soon stop them in their tracks before they could fill the earth with rivers of blood, the blood, for the most part, of the innocent. Nor is it likely that an omnipotent God, who is also good, would have created man with passions and lusts so strong and perverse as to make war a more or less normal thing. All nations have gloried in the exploits of war and for many people it has a kind of psychological attractiveness. This, together with the perverted patriotism known as nationalism, has hampered the peace movement at every turn.

Second, there is the struggle for existence, and the consequent waste. Again, the struggle for existence is not of man's making. Man appears upon the earth not of his own will, and he is forced to struggle or perish. It is the rule of the game. Struggle in itself, of course, is not evil, that is, if it is confined within proper limits. But countless billions through the ages, in order to survive at all, have had to carry on a terrific struggle not only with the forces of nature and with wild beasts but with their fellows as well. Every man's hand has been strangely set against his brother, and out of this have come wars. It would seem that an omnipotent and benevolent God could have and would have limited the struggle to that minimum necessary to insure the highest moral and spiritual development. Likewise, it is doubtful whether such a God, free from all Necessity, would have allowed the vast spawnings of the human race which up to modern times, at least, have made war inevitable. Nor would He have made so many promising beginnings which

ended in dismal failure. Even du Noüy is forced to admit: "Innumerable attempts were made. Entire groups disappeared, as if experience had proved that they were defective and that Nature had blundered."<sup>29</sup>

Third, there are man's perversions of such gifts as sex, political capacity, and religion. It is at least questionable whether an omnipotent God, capable of creating without difficulty or hindrance, would allow such monstrous distortions. Either He would not have loaded man's passions so heavily or He would have placed definite safeguards so that lustful monsters like Commodus and Mohammed II would not have been able, at their pleasure, to deprive hundreds of innocent victims of their freedom, character, and self-respect. Fourth, the apparent weakness of ideals and the tragic fate of so many idealists raises further questions. If God is almighty, and if He created the earth and man for moral and spiritual reasons, it would seem that idealists and ideals would not have such a desperately hard time. Finally, there is the extreme slowness of evolution. All absolutists who try to escape from the problem by denying the reality of time are subject to the consequences pointed out in Chapter 3. Those who, like Knudson, do hold that time is real for God are under the necessity of explaining why evolution and progress are so slow. If they take refuge in the fact of man's free will, the answer is that only within the last six thousand years has man had anything worthy of the name, and even then, for most men, the exercise of freedom and responsibility has been possible only within very narrow limits. It must be repeated that an omnipotent God could have done better. In fact, in an interesting passage, Bowne goes so far as to say:

<sup>29</sup> Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), p. 71. Used by permission.

The only end which can be allowed to have absolute value is an ethical one; but it is hard to detect any relation to such an end in the mass of cosmic details. It is still harder to find any reason why this end might not have been secured in a more direct and efficient way.<sup>30</sup>

In the face of these facts, the absolutist usually pleads ignorance due to the limitations of the human mind.<sup>31</sup> Yet the human mind cannot possibly rest in such a confession of limitation and ignorance. Constituted as it is, it must continue to probe deeper and to sift the evidence for a better answer. "It would have been better," says the writer of II Esdras, "that we should not be here and live in ungodliness, and suffer, without understanding why."<sup>32</sup> In short, the dysteleological facts speak for themselves, and they seem to constitute a clue which, considered along with the other clues, may lead us to a more reasonable explanation than the absolutist is able to supply.

The fourth clue, the signs of purpose in history, proves, along with the higher nature of man (the most important aspect of the second clue), that there must be a God. Naturalism, as we have seen, utterly fails in trying to explain these facts in terms of chance or natural law or the blind unconscious processes of nature. Theistic absolutism has a far better explanation of the teleological facts in terms of a Supreme Mind. But again, as in the case of the second clue, the most that the fourth clue can prove is that there must be a God that is a Cause great enough to account for such an effect. It does not, however, prove that He is also omnipotent. First of all, and most impressive of all, there

<sup>30</sup> Borden P. Bowne, *Metaphysics* (New York: American Book Co., 1916), p. 295. Used by permission.

<sup>31</sup> See Knudson, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

<sup>32</sup> II Esdras 4:12. *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, trans. J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939). Used by permission.

is the majestic forward movement toward unity and world order which began billions of years ago and which finds its culmination in man with his higher capacities, in his institutions, and in the possibility of an orderly and peaceful world. The absolutist has a difficult time explaining why it should start at so low a level, why it should take so long, and why there should be so many casualties along the way. The same criticism applies to the second, the increase and growth of values. Again, the third, the power of ideals and idealists in history, at the most proves that there is an ideal Source, a spiritual Power, a God active in history, but not that He is omnipotent, since the triumph of ideals is never complete and absolute in history.

Likewise the fourth, the fact of moral law and judgment in history, proves at the most only that there is a moral structure in history back of which there must be a Moral Guardian, a God, but it falls far short of proving that He is almighty. Justice for the righteous and judgment for the wicked is often altogether too late in coming. Sometimes, at least within history, it fails to come at all, and often, when it does come, it is a kind of rough justice. The Bible itself gives abundant testimony to these facts. One has only to read Job and Habakkuk. Again, while the facts of providence, as expressed through "the cunning of reason," the growth of good enterprises from unpromising beginnings, saviors, and the living church, constitute real evidence for the existence of the Living God, yet, even this, falls far short of proving that He is all powerful. "The cunning of reason" often involves a use of the crudest and most barbarous instruments. Likewise, many good and promising enterprises fail, and their failure saps faith and checks the growth of values. Saviors are long rejected and many of them suffer terribly; and if the Living Church is, in a special



sense, the means which the Living God is using to convert the world, up to date at least He has not succeeded as well as an omnipotent God ought to have succeeded.

Finally, so far as the fifth clue is concerned, while theistic absolutism is certainly not so narrowly analytic and reductive as is naturalism, it is still far from being as synoptic as it ought to be. For while naturalism tends to ignore the teleological facts, theistic absolutism does not take the dysteleological facts seriously enough.<sup>33</sup> In short, as this discussion has shown, theistic absolutism is inadequate as an explanation of history. It has two basic weaknesses. First, it is not empirical enough; it tends to be too theoretical and abstract, and hence is unconvincing. It does not take the actual facts of experience seriously enough, and therefore it fails to produce conviction in a scientific and an empirical age. In fact, many theologians have forsaken the absolutist camp for this very reason.<sup>34</sup> Closely related to the first is the second. As we have seen, absolutism is not synoptic enough. While atheism tries to build on the dysteleological facts alone, absolutism goes to the opposite extreme and tries to build on the teleological facts alone. Hence, while absolutism is much superior to naturalism, yet neither is adequate.

#### TOWARD A MORE ADEQUATE SOLUTION

The fact that neither the atheistic or naturalistic nor the absolutistic solution is tenable in the light of all the facts would indeed seem to leave us in a kind of dilemma. The

<sup>33</sup> For an absolutistic attempt to solve the problem of evil from the standpoint of the philosophy of history, see S. Eddy, *God in History*, pp. 259-76.

<sup>34</sup> Among these is Edwin Lewis, formerly a vigorous champion of absolutism; see his latest book, *The Creator and the Adversary*, pp. 7-10. For an impressive list of modern thinkers who have rejected or greatly modified absolutism, see Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-301.

easiest way out would seem to be some form of agnosticism, to leave the whole matter as an open question. But agnosticism, as has been observed before, constitutes a failure of nerve, a refusal to think further because the way seems difficult. Nor is it necessary for the mind to rest in agnosticism. Why should the swimmer give up wrestling with wind and wave when already the shore looms in sight? For when we apply the fifth clue—that is, perspective and synopsis—and cease looking at evil alone as the naturalist tends to do, or at good alone as the theistic absolutist tends to do, but look at both good and evil in the light shed by all five of the preliminary clues, then a sixth, and this time an ultimate clue, is discernible.

This sixth clue is simply the belief of some through the ages, and of a rapidly increasing group of modern thinkers, that God is in some way limited in power. God has obstacles which hinder the operations of His Will so that He is not always and immediately able to execute, or to execute perfectly, what His Mind intends. This does not mean that God is powerless, for all the teleological facts bear witness to His power. An impotent God could neither have created the universe nor could He give direction to such a diverse and multiform process as history presents. He is still conceived by most finitists, not only as the greatest single power in the universe but also greater than all the other forces combined since He is the World Ground. Without God there would be nothing but the wildest kind of chaos without rhyme or reason. God is the supreme self-conscious principle of both reason and value; He wills and seeks to increase the sum total of both. This appears to have been His motive in the creation of the universe and especially of man, a self-conscious creature capable of reason and of living for and achieving ideal ends.

One other thing relative to God's power must be made plain. Today men can really believe in a greater God than ever before. On the one hand there is the greater world of space which astronomy has discovered, and on the other there is the equally great extent in time with which history, and the philosophy of history, especially concerns itself. Instead of a small three-story universe scarcely six thousand years old, and an anthropomorphic deity sitting upon a throne like an oriental potentate surrounded by an angelic choir who please his ego by singing his praises, the universe and the time process is so vast that all anthropomorphism, except the very highest and the most spiritual, must be ruled out. There is no place for the old man sitting upon a throne; he has vanished from the minds of thoughtful men. Encompassed by the vastness of space, of the physical universe on the one hand, and by the vastness of time, of history on the other, as modern man is, the only kind of God that he can believe in is the great Spirit who inhabits both time and eternity. Thus when we speak of God as limited, impotence is ruled out. All that is meant is that He encounters opposition, hindrances, resistance, so that His work is never perfect, within time at least, but more or less thwarted and twisted. Thus God must work wisely, patiently, to weave His patterns on the loom of time. The details, especially, seem to give Him infinite trouble.<sup>35</sup>

Our task, then, is to subject theistic finitism, this idea of a limited God, to the same kind of test to which we have subjected theistic absolutism and all the other historic answers to the problem of history. It must justify itself before the bar of history, that is, in the light of the five pre-

<sup>35</sup> For an illuminating discussion of this modern "expansion" and "contraction" of the idea of God, see Brightman, *The Problem of God*, pp. 60-106.

liminary clues; but before we do this it may be well for us to consider briefly the various types of theistic finitism.

Like theistic absolutism, theistic finitism is not just of yesterday. The oldest form is Zoroastrian dualism. Zoroaster held that two great powers, Ahura Mazda, the good Spirit, and Angra Mainyu, the evil Spirit, contend on the stage of history for mastery. In good apocalyptic fashion, the Persian prophet conceived the struggle as advancing toward a climax, a great final conflict in which Ahura would finally triumph over his rival and banish him. The Jews borrowed the idea of a Devil from the Persians, and the Christians in turn from the Jews. By New Testament times he was regarded as a fallen angel and as the enemy of both God and man. Both Jesus and Paul believed in Satan, an Evil Spirit, the Adversary of God, and it is clearly evident that Jesus attributed certain evils to him.<sup>36</sup> Paul pictured the universe in the terms of a great conflict between good and evil in which the hosts of righteousness, led by the triumphant Christ, would win the victory.<sup>37</sup> This cosmic struggle between good and evil, darkness and light, Christ and Satan, is graphically pictured in the Book of Revelation. Today his Satanic Majesty has been banished from most respectable theology. Nevertheless, against the dark background of the world crisis, some theologians are turning in the direction of dualism for relief. Edwin Lewis, in his very able recent book *The Creator and the Adversary*, expounds a full-fledged dualism.

On any showing, life is a conflict and the world is a battlefield. . . . Cosmic benevolence stands in contrast with cosmic malevolence, and while both are focused in greater or lesser degree at any point, nowhere are they focused so unmistakably, so sharply, and so tragically, as in

<sup>36</sup> See Luke 13:15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 2:15; I Cor. 15:20-28.

the life of man. . . . There is a dead fly in the amber which is the universe, and whose mind is not teased by the fact? <sup>38</sup>

Rejecting monism and every attempt to place the recalcitrant factor within God, Lewis insists that there is a real Devil; God has a real adversary in the form of an Evil Spirit. <sup>39</sup>

Besides the Zoroastrian type of dualism, there is another type which conceives the universe as composed of two elements, usually Mind (God) and matter. Sometimes God is conceived of as molding the universe and man out of matter. While God is absolutely good, evil is ascribed to matter which God must use in the process of creation, but which, because of its intractable nature, He can never mold in full accordance with His ideal Patterns. The idea that matter is the cause of evil was especially congenial to Greek thought and can be traced back to Plato, though Plato himself was probably more of a pluralist than a dualist. This type of dualism at its best is seen in the Neoplatonists, especially in Plotinus. Evil he ascribes to matter, the last and, therefore, the very lowest emanation from the undifferentiated One. The universe is a mixture, the two ingredients being reason and necessity, mind and matter. It is this evil matter which draws the soul away from the beautiful Forms and leads it to evil. God is absolutely good; all evil comes from the irrational, formless, and chaotic matter. <sup>40</sup>

The third type of finitism may be designated pluralistic. While the dualist holds that the universe consists of two

<sup>38</sup> Edwin Lewis, *The Creator and the Adversary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 16. Used by permission.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-10, 18-27, 168.

<sup>40</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads*, in C. M. Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 407-14; see also R. A. Tsanoff, *The Nature of Evil*, pp. 14-16, 20-27.



contending powers or of two basic principles, the pluralist believes that the universe is composed of more than two basic principles or elements. Though pluralism had its beginnings with some of the earliest Greek philosophers, especially Empedocles and Anaxagoras, it is with Plato that it comes to full flower, especially as an explanation of evil. This master thinker held that there are at least three metaphysical elements: the Forms or Patterns, of which there are many kinds, the Receptacle, that is the wild, chaotic Necessity which hinders and twists and mars, and God, the Maker, Father and Constructor of the universe who brought it out of the primeval disorder and chaos.<sup>41</sup> The most extreme modern pluralist is William James. In revolt against Hegel, he thinks of the universe as composed of many diverse elements very loosely joined. God is finite, and the universe is quite external to Him.

His will has to struggle with conditions not imposed on that will by itself. He tolerates provisionally what he has not created, and there with endless patience tries to overcome it and live it down. He has, in short, a history.<sup>42</sup>

The best example of pluralism is the mighty system of Alfred North Whitehead. Though it is pluralistic in that reality is conceived as consisting of many units or entities, yet there is unity amid diversity. "The actual entity is seen as a process; there is a growth from phase to phase; there are processes of integration and of reintegration."<sup>43</sup> Whitehead is a theist. God is the conserver of values and the world's savior. Nevertheless, God is not the Creator of the

<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 50A-54A, pp. 114-29.

<sup>42</sup> William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909), p. 294. Used by permission.

<sup>43</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 433-34. This and following quotation used by permission.

world. The world process goes on more or less automatically. God's role is to bring order out of chaos. "He is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."<sup>44</sup>

The solutions offered thus far have tried to solve the problem of evil by means of certain factors conceived as external to God.<sup>45</sup> The fourth types are those which try to solve the problem by locating the recalcitrant factors within God. Since we are not interested in finitism as such but rather in showing how as a sixth clue it makes history intelligible, we shall confine our attention to two outstanding representatives of this point of view.

The first is William Pepperell Montague; he rejects the traditional atheism because it cannot explain the good, and the traditional theism because it fails to offer a reasonable explanation of the evil. The truth, then, Montague insists, must lie between these two extremes.

There must be a God, a force or trend upward, to account for the more than casual amount of goodness in existence, and there must be a tremendous limitation in such a power to account for the evil.<sup>46</sup>

Within God's experience there are many factors: the logical forms, the chaotic "ever-changing precipitate of compossibility" which results from the struggle for existence among the forms, and finally, "the will to good, or the tendency toward harmony," which ever seeks to master the chaos and to bring order out of it.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

<sup>45</sup> For other thinkers who explain evil in terms of external factors, see Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 300.

<sup>46</sup> William Pepperell Montague, *The Ways of Things* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), pp. 663-64. Used by permission.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 664; for a brief and very interesting exposition of Montague's finitism, see also his *Belief Unbound*.

The second is Edgar Sheffield Brightman. Brightman holds that God is rational and absolutely benevolent as far as His purposes and intentions are concerned. Unlike man, God never commits sin, that is, intentional evil. God is very great in power, as evidenced by the vastness of the universe and all the teleological facts.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, though great in power, beyond the ability of the human mind to conceive, yet He is not omnipotent. Not only did God limit Himself when He created men as free moral agents, but He also continually faces conditions, not of His own making, which enter into all His works to the smallest details and which tend to thwart, hinder, twist, and disfigure them. This constitutes the metaphysical source of the lower nature of man and of all the evils with which both nature and history abound, that is, those which cannot be traced to sin, to man's abuse of his God-given freedom.

Since Brightman is an idealist, and since idealism holds that reality is of the nature of mind and emphasizes wholeness and unity, it is obvious that he cannot be consistent and relegate evil to an external factor or factors. Hence he holds that evil must be within God, not something external to Him. There is a dualism within God, just as there is within man. God always wills the rational and the good, but He is not always able to perform perfectly or immediately that which He wills, since within God's experience there exists the Given which He neither willed nor created but which confronts Him at every instance and serves to obstruct and mar His creative acts.

The Given consists of the eternal, uncreated laws of reason and also of equally eternal and uncreated processes of nonrational consciousness which exhibit all the ultimate qualities of sense objects (*qualia*), disorderly impulses and

<sup>48</sup> See Brightman, *The Problem of God*, pp. 60-85.

desires, such experiences as pain and suffering, the forms of space and time, and whatever in God is the source of surd evil.<sup>49</sup>

From this description it is certain that Brightman does not regard the Given as altogether and absolutely evil, as Lewis regards the Adversary; it is evil only in so far as it is the source of disorderly impulses and pain and suffering. Moreover, God is continually seeking to control and to direct the disorderly impulses of the Given into creative and constructive channels. Thus history is really the story of God's battles with the Given, and His greatest defeats as well as His greatest victories.

The God of history—the patient God of whom we are thinking—is, then, a God for whom these historical changes are real, and who somehow brings his will to expression in human life through them. This means that God rejoices in the forward movements of human history and grieves at its delays and reverses, yet is able to make both contribute to his purposes.<sup>50</sup>

### THEISTIC FINITISM AS AN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

We have tested all the historic answers to the problem of history and have found them wanting. This left us with something of a dilemma. But at this juncture, theistic finitism, the belief of many through the ages that God must be in some sense limited, made its appearance as a possible sixth clue. After having considered the various forms which this view has taken, one further task remains before we are justified in accepting the limited God as the sixth clue; we must test it in the light of the five preliminary clues, just as

<sup>49</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 337. Used by permission.

<sup>50</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Finding of God* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1931), p. 129. Used by permission.

the other interpretations of history were tested. If, in the course of testing, it becomes evident that it is the most coherent view of history, only then can we accept the limited God as a sixth, and this time an ultimate clue.

It is certainly coherent with the first clue, that history seems a manifestation of the ultimate. The metaphysical validity of history rests on the fact of the reality of time. The absolutist has great difficulty in reconciling his conception of an omnipotent God with the fact of the reality of time. Many, like Bowne and du Noüy, try the way of the timeless Absolute and become lost in endless complications.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, absolutists, such as Knudson, who recognize the reality of time, face the problem of accounting for the endless sorrows, evils, and tragedies of time. The finitist encounters no such difficulties. Using human personality as his clue, he can freely hold that God, like man, except on a vaster scale and from a loftier perspective, can view and participate in the events of time while at the same time transcending them. He can also hold with Hegel that history is essentially the work of God, since God is conscious of and directly related to events—even though only in the large, because of the constant interference of the recalcitrant elements, is it possible to see much of His purpose and plan.

The limited God as ultimate Cause also constitutes the best explanation of the second clue. The gradual emergence and development of the higher nature of man, for which atheism has no adequate explanation, is accounted for. It is slow in making its appearance and always leads a somewhat precarious existence because God confronts conditions, not of His own making, which force Him to proceed slowly, for the most part, and with difficulty. There is

<sup>51</sup> See previous discussion, Chapter 3, pages 86-89.



reason in man, and reason makes its appearance in man only because there is reason in the universe. Similarly, man has a capacity for beauty and a capacity for goodness, simply because there is a Divine Source of the ideals of Beauty and Goodness Who is continually stimulating man; and as the result of this stimulation, man's aesthetic and moral capacities develop and flower. Finally, man has a mystical or religious capacity, a longing which no brute knows, for the same reason. That is, God is ever stimulating man and seeking to draw him to Himself. Moreover, the sixth clue, likewise, explains the lower nature of man. God does not will this aspect of man. It appears because of another factor or factors. God's role is that of challenging man to use his higher nature to control, to govern, and to direct his lower, and as man responds to the Divine Will, the amount of value in the universe is increased.

The limited God is also the best solution of the problem presented by the third clue, the irrational factors as they appear upon the stage of history. Barbarism and inhuman cruelty are not products of the Divine Will. They are irrational facts which inevitably appear as by-products of the creative process, facts which God not only does not will but which He seeks to eliminate. Though sometimes failing in the short run, in the long run God always succeeds. Likewise, the evil incarnate in human monsters and destroyers, such as Commodus, Tamerlane, and Hitler, is not part and parcel of the purpose of God. They appear and are what they are, and do what they do, partly because of the blind, irrational Necessity with which God has to cope, and partly due to their own sinful willing, the measure of the latter being relative to the amount of reason and moral sensibility which they possess.

The struggle for existence and the consequent waste are similarly the result of this same blind, irrational Necessity. The best that God can do is to continue to operate in various ways, but especially through His best and most refined instrument, man, and thus to limit and eventually remove them. In the perversions and corruptions, we catch a glimpse of the attack of the irrational upon the best things which God in His infinite goodness and love has made. It not only thwarts His best works and the highest expressions of His purpose, but very often twists them into strange and even hideous patterns. The best that God can do is to raise up mighty prophets who protest in holy wrath and thus initiate great reform movements through which God is eventually able to defeat evil.

In the apparent weakness of ideals and idealists, we see the sorrows and tragedies of the Divine Life at its worst. But this, as we have seen, is not the whole story nor is it the last word. After Good Friday, the day of tragedy and defeat, and as certain and as real as Good Friday, comes Easter Morning, the day of triumph, together with the possibility of renewing the struggle on a higher level. Thus the struggle proceeds from level to level with some hard-won and costly, but, nevertheless, real progress at each new level. Good Friday, the Cross, and Easter Morning, the Resurrection, may therefore be conceived as constituting nothing less than an eternal parable of the Divine Life as it manifests Itself and carries on Its tremendous labors and struggles upon the plane of history. Finally, even the extreme slowness of evolution as a whole and the ultimate doom take on meaning in the light of the limited God as the Ultimate Cause. Further consideration of the ultimate doom, however, must wait until the next chapter.

The fourth clue, history demands consideration of signs of purpose, is also greatly illuminated by the conception of the limited God. This conception explains the long, extremely slow, but steady and persistent creative advance over perhaps ten billion years from the primitive chaos toward an orderly human society, and the possibility, in our day, of world government and a lasting peace. Likewise, the increase and growth of values from the days of the first submen to the present becomes intelligible. The slowness of the processes and the great cost are evidences of resistance to the Divine plan and purpose. But the fact of the continued advance and growth in the face of all obstacles shows not only that the Divine Will is at work but also that it is impossible to stop It, and that in the end It will win the victory. The power of ideals and idealists, but only after a bitter struggle and often only after temporary defeat and death, also points in the direction of a limited but powerful God. The same can likewise be said of moral law and judgment. Justice is often late, rarely exact, and sometimes never comes, at least within history, because the Divine Power has to struggle with difficulties not of its own making. But in the end judgment does come to the haughty because God is not powerless and has been able to set bounds beyond which evil men can go only at their peril.

Finally, the facts of providence sustain the belief in a limited God. God, since He is limited, must function through instruments, imperfect as they may be. Thus He made use of the Assyrian in Isaiah's day, of Cyrus, the Persian, during the time of Deutero-Isaiah, of Alexander and Caesar in their day, even of Adolf Hitler only yesterday and of the Marxian Communists today. Since He is always bound to do the very best possible in every situation and to bring the best out of the worst, He is often forced to

function, as best He can, through crude instruments, simply because no better are available for what needs to be done. But these do not express His real purpose and nature. In fact, they add to His problems and to His experiences of tragedy, sorrow, and defeat.

The "saviors of mankind," especially the great philosophical, ethical, and, highest of all, the great religious teachers and prophets—these alone most truly express His real nature, purpose, and benevolence. Christ stands above them all as the most perfect embodiment of the moral and spiritual ideal. His courage, his unselfish devotion, and his compassionate love reveal "the eternal Christ at the Heart of God."<sup>52</sup> In his cross and passion and death is revealed the Eternal Cross which constitutes a constant experience of God as He sorrows over the tragedies of the world which He has made and which through His own creative suffering He goes forth to redeem. Easter Morning, Christ's Resurrection, however, together with Christ's conquering influence down the centuries, reveals, as nothing else, the triumphant forward march of God across the ages. God also makes use of all human institutions to insure the victory of the good. But the churches, and especially the Christian Church, as the imperfect but real embodiment and instrument of the Christ ideal, give Him His best means to conquer evil and to establish His spiritual sway.

Finally, the fifth clue, history demands perspective and synopsis, leads us definitely to the limited God idea as the most coherent interpretation of the historical process. If there were an omnipotent God, then it is reasonable to suppose that we would be able to detect more of His benevolence even on the small-scale range of every day's events.

<sup>52</sup> A phrase of Dr. Herbert Lee Gray, formerly Professor of Bible and Religion at Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas.

But in our consideration of the fifth clue, it became evident that it is impossible to see much of a rational pattern from the short perspective of a day or even a century. History only reveals a rational and conceivably benevolent pattern when seen as a whole. History, at any point, always involves more or less of a mixture of good and evil; it is never purely white or purely black, but more or less gray. Hence perspective and synopsis become imperative; and this very fact demands a limited God as the most coherent solution of the dilemma. It solves the problem of the need of perspective, since a limited God, struggling with gigantic problems and obstacles, would need more time to make His purposes evident. In most cases we would not expect Him to accomplish nearly so much as an omnipotent and unimpeded God. Again, the very fact of the mixture of good and evil, purpose and irrational factors, forces us to be synoptic. Consequently the application of the fifth clue to the other four preliminary clues results in the conception of the limited God as the most coherent and meaningful interpretation of history. On no other basis does history seem to make sense.

It is beyond the scope of the present investigation to settle the question as to which of the theories of the finite or limited God is the most tenable. An adequate treatment of this vexing problem would take us too far from the main thoroughfare of our inquiry. However, it does seem that some solution, such as that of Brightman or Montague, which places the recalcitrant element or elements within God, would seem the most feasible. Dualism does not do justice to the basic unity which is found within history as well as within nature. It tends to divide the universe too sharply into good and bad, white and black, sheep and goats. Experience shows that rarely, indeed, if ever, is evil



to be found in a simon-pure form, free from all mixtures of good. As we have already seen, history always constitutes a mixture of good and evil which it is difficult to unscramble. Moreover, good and evil seem somehow to spring from a common source which constitutes some kind of unity amid diversity. Tamerlane and Christ, Hitler and Gandhi are products of the same essential process. In spite of evidences of a dualism within history, the lines are not so clearly drawn as Zoroaster and Lewis would have us believe. The mystery of evil is more subtle than that. Moreover, the dualism of Plotinus hardly appeals to the modern mind, since to the modern mind the concept of matter is far from clear.

The basic difficulty with most forms of pluralism is that, like dualism, they fail to do justice to the essential and basic unity which both the process of nature and the process of history seem to display. This is far less true of Whitehead's system. In fact, the basic difficulty with Whitehead's system is that, following the leadings of the aesthetic ideal, his conception of God is all sweetness and light. If there is any truth in the idea of a moral order, as we have good reason to believe there is,<sup>53</sup> then there must be a measure of sternness in the Divine nature. God, too, must, like His prophets, feel a holy wrath at the spectacle of cruel sinners taking advantage of the innocent; and this holy wrath may well express itself through the device of leaving the stubborn and the willful to walk their own vain ways until, overreaching themselves, they pull down destruction upon their own heads.

Probably systems like those of Brightman and Montague are more in line with the truth. While by no means free from difficulty, they are free from the objections which

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 6, pages 159-64.

make the other systems less plausible.<sup>54</sup> On the one hand they are inclusive enough to include all the essential facts, however diverse. On the other hand, they also provide for the basic unity found in both nature and history.

### AN IMPORTANT OBJECTION

It seems, then, that the sixth clue to history must be the limited God as the ultimate Cause. Before we conclude our discussion, however, a rather serious objection must be considered. It may be contended that it is arbitrary to attempt to explain history in terms of a limitation of the Divine Power, when it is just as plausible to interpret the facts in terms of a defect in the Divine Character. God, for all we know, may really be as capricious as the primitives believe. History may be nothing more than a show which He has set in motion for His own entertainment; a show which He will continue only so long as it adds to His pleasure. We may be in the grip of Fate in the form of an arbitrary and more or less sadistic Being, Who does not care for us at all but Who finds amusement in watching our petty struggles.<sup>55</sup> There are times when all of us, upon contemplating some of the chapters of human history or when in the grip of misfortune, feel that this view is correct. But before we surrender to despair, there are a number of things which must be considered which render this version of history superficial and highly improbable.

<sup>54</sup> The chief difficulty for many minds is that evil is placed within God's experience. For some, it seems to detract from the perfect goodness of God; but it need not. If God does not create or sanction evil but constantly seeks to control it, then its presence in His experience in no wise detracts from His moral and spiritual perfection. It is far nobler to conceive God as struggling with evil and tragedy than to think of Him as above the battle and viewing it serenely from afar.

<sup>55</sup> For an interesting fictional statement of this point of view, see Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

First of all, a rational account of the existence of evil can be given in terms of the limitation of the Divine Power. If this were not true, then we would have to look farther; but since it is true, there is no strictly logical necessity pressing us to continue the search. Second, men, as we have seen, in all civilizations, soon become aware of a perfect ideal of goodness evidently superhuman which they do not invent or merely imagine but which forces itself upon them, leaving them restless and often challenging them to make the greatest sacrifices. This ideal is not physical but belongs to another category altogether; it is mental and spiritual, and, in fact, has no real existence apart from mind. Since it seems unreal apart from mind, yet cannot exist except in mind, and at the same time seems superhuman, not invented by the human mind but something which it discovers, the only logical conclusion is the existence of a Supreme Mind in which it finds its Source and Home. If this is true, as over four thousand years of man's moral experience seems to indicate, then this Supreme Mind must be absolutely good. We may be duped by our ideals, but the burden of proof rests heavily upon the skeptic. A coherent account of man's ideal experience seems to indicate that at this point as nowhere else we are touching that which is ultimately real.<sup>56</sup>

Third, that the good is more real and fundamental than the evil has become apparent again and again. Evil is irrational and, hence, self-destructive; and in so far as the Creative Power would give way to evil, He would be destroying, at the same time, the very thing which He was trying to build. No rational human being would be found guilty of such nonsense and it seems safe to say that much less would God, the Source of all the reason and order in the universe.

<sup>56</sup> See also previous discussion, especially Chapter 4, pages 109-13.

Fourth, the processes of history point to the development of the moral and spiritual nature of man as the goal. If this is the goal of the process, as the second and fourth clues seem to show, then it is reasonable to suppose that the Author of the process is also essentially good, interested, above all, in the realization of values and in the prevention of evil or disvalue.

Fifth, in history there appear the great prophets and teachers of mankind who are the real discoverers of the ideals upon which civilization rests. Above them all towers the Christ, the supreme and most dynamic manifestation of the moral and spiritual ideal in history. To insist that God is supreme in power but limited in character is to contend that God, the Creator, is less than the highest of His creatures. This seems preposterous; it is far more reasonable to suppose that the very highest and best of His creatures most adequately reveal His true character and nature. Finally, it may be urged, as it has been urged before, that the chief sin of fatalism in all its forms is a lack of synopsis. Men are most fatalistic when they are least capable of thinking synoptically, of looking at the picture as a whole. It is in our sadder hours that we are most likely to fix our attention on the worst side of history and to commit the fallacy of trying to judge history in the light of one set of facts alone.

We are driven to the conclusion, then, that the sixth clue to history must be the limited God as the ultimate Cause. On this basis, and this basis alone, does history become intelligible. On no other basis does it seem to really make sense. In short, theistic finitism seems to be the most illuminating of all the interpretations of history.

## Chapter 9

### THE SEVENTH CLUE: HISTORY DEMANDS IMMORTALITY AS ULTIMATE GOAL

#### TWO REMAINING PROBLEMS

There have been times when even philosophers have been rash enough to suppose that their systems contained the final answers to the age-old enigmas which have puzzled thinkers ever since man first began to reflect. The great Hegel himself was not altogether free from this fault. To-day, however, confronted by the complexity and the vastness of the universe and of the temporal process, most thinkers have been duly chastened. In fact, some, such as the positivists, as we have seen, are by far too timid. The philosopher, not unlike the explorer and the navigator, must be bold. He must dare to fathom the dark depths and scale the dangerous heights. This we have attempted to do in this inquiry into the ultimate meaning of history; and our attempts have not been altogether fruitless. For we have discovered six clues which at least render the ultimate secret of history less dark and formidable. The purpose of this present chapter is to determine whether, in the light of the six clues already discovered and considered, there may appear a seventh clue which may also afford a reasonable solution to two problems which have come to light, but to which, thus far at least, no satisfactory answer has been given.

These two problems arose during the discussion of the third clue: history demands consideration of irrational fac-



tors. The first problem is the problem of the ultimate doom which hangs over this planet, toward which history is moving nearer and nearer, even though it may as yet be far off. Whether the whole human race can be destroyed through an atomic war is a debatable question, but this question of the ultimate doom which awaits mankind is hardly within the realm of controversy. The sun's energy is being dissipated every moment; it cannot last forever. Some day this planet, once teeming with myriads of living forms, will be shrouded in one eternal night of cold and death.

The second problem is the problem of justice for the individual, especially for that vast number for whom history affords no adequate opportunity for the development and expression of their higher natures. In fact, during our discussion of the third clue, it became evident that most of the individuals who have lived upon the earth have never had the chance which they deserve and the kind of opportunity which it is reasonable to suppose a just and benevolent God should desire for them. Moreover, it is doubtful whether any individual, within the narrow sphere of his earthly existence, has ever had enough opportunity to develop to the fullest possible extent. For even the most fortunate, all too soon, old age and death set in and thus it seems as if the show is ended before the first act is over. Again, man finds himself challenged by ideals which can never be realized within the narrow limits of history.

### TOWARD A SOLUTION

One possible answer to the problem of the ultimate doom has already been given, that it is as yet far off, perhaps not less than ten billion years in the future. But while this fact serves to give us hope as to the possibility of

progress for long ages to come, and thus helps to justify this earthly experiment, still it does not solve the ultimate problem. Great as may be man's future achievements, and long as doom may tarry, yet in the end it will come. The time will come when all the visible signs of evolution and progress will stop and it is little comfort to insist that since this day is far off, it is well to forget it. Man, unlike the brute, must, at times at least, by the very necessities of his human nature, think in terms of the future and of the remote as well as the immediate future. Man cannot help thinking at times about his destiny, and since he cannot live without some kind of philosophy, some kind of view of the whole, some kind of *Weltanschauung*, there are times when he must envisage even the far, far distant future. No world view is possible, in the fullest sense of the word, without looking into the distant future as well as the remote past.

Moreover, even if utopia could be achieved upon earth (which it cannot), still the problem of the individual is not solved. The vast mass of individuals who lived before utopia was achieved had to worry, labor, fret, and finally die without being able to enter into the kingdom. Most of them, in fact, did not even have the privilege, like Moses, of seeing the Promised Land afar off. Many of them also made great contributions and sacrifices toward making a better life possible for others. They were exploited for the benefit of future generations who may not even so much as appreciate the many costly sacrifices made on their behalf. Consequently, if there are no possibilities for the individual beyond history, then there is no justice in the universe. If there is no justice in the universe, then there is no God. The result is fatalism. The most that one could hope for would be the existence of a kind of blind will such as Schopenhauer's.

However, in the light of the first, the most important aspect of the second, and the fourth clues, all forms of fatalism are definitely precluded.<sup>1</sup> These clues indubitably point individually toward theism. More than that, by means of the fifth clue, perspective and synopsis, it has become possible to synthesize the dysteleological facts supplied by the third clue and certain aspects of the second clue with the teleological evidence supplied by the other clues. The result is the sixth clue, the limited God. In terms of a God limited in power, but not in benevolence, the tragic fate of individuals within history can, to some extent at least, be understood. God is always trying to do His best to increase and to conserve values, and history thus far represents the very best possible that He could do under the circumstances.

The sixth clue also, as we have seen before, sheds some light on the dark problem of the ultimate doom.<sup>2</sup> For some ten billion of years God will be able to hold back chaos and to achieve order and realize values upon this planet, but in the very nature of things He may not be able to continue these particular circumstances forever. Ten billion years from now, in fact, the earth may have really fulfilled this special phase of the Divine plan.

Yet this by no means clears God so far as the individual is concerned. In spite of what the Calvinists may say, God has no more right to exploit the individual for His own glory or merely for the benefit of others than man has to exploit his fellows. Creation can only be justified as a means toward increasing the totality of value in the universe, not only for God but also for all His creatures. In the light of the sixth clue we may say that God created because He was sure, that in spite of evil, creation would so immeasurably

<sup>1</sup> For criticisms of fatalism see Chapter 8, pages 206-9.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 8, page 235.

increase values that the measure of evil and suffering which it would entail would in the end be justified.

Even this, however, does not solve our problem. For even if within history as a whole, from the day of creation to the day of doom, the sum total of value achieved should far outweigh the disvalue, still the problem of the individual, and especially the tragic fate of the many who have perished along the long human trail, remains unsolved. Moreover it is impossible to hold that the amount of value in the universe can continue to increase and can be conserved if the individuals who are the real carriers of value must perish. With the death of each individual, something actual or potential is forever lost. Worse yet, with the vast death of the solar system, since it would be impossible for new generations of individuals to come into existence, all would be lost. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that God Himself is able to conserve the value achieved by individuals without also conserving them as conscious centers and carriers of value. If God, however, creates individuals merely to add to His own bliss, without a real concern for them as individuals, God Himself would be the great Exploiter, nothing short of a monstrous Cronus, swallowing each new generation of His children. Since God must be wholly benevolent, it is doubtful whether He would continue creating individuals if each new generation would, in its turn, be subject to the inexorable necessity of death and extinction. As a matter of fact, unless He can conserve the individual, at least those who are worthy, all His mighty efforts in creation will in the end result in failure.

For if all persons were to perish with their bodily death, God would be in an unenviable position. He would either continue forever to create new persons, or he would give up the enterprise of creation. If he continued to create new

persons, then he would be conducting a cosmic bonfire, with each new generation warmed by the burning of the previous one; God and man alike could look back on centuries of effort with no permanent results, no persons treated as ends in themselves, no life coming to full development.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we find ourselves driven by the logic of the situation to a possible seventh clue: history demands immortality as ultimate goal. But before we can accept immortality as the seventh clue, we must test it further in the light of all six of the clues thus far established. All the clues shed some light on the probability of immortality. The first and second clues lead us to the fact of man's time-transcending capacity. On the one hand, he lives within time, but on the other, he can think in terms of eternity. This alone, of course, does not prove that he has an immortal destiny but it adds to the probability. For any creature, so utterly subject to the ravages of time as to be utterly incapable of transcending it, would not be a likely candidate for immortality. Thus few would contend that the brutes have such a destiny. Again, the second clue reveals man as a pursuer and carrier of seemingly deathless moral and spiritual ideals which have no real significance except as they find embodiment in personality. It seems preposterous that the good should have the same destiny as the wicked. Goodness, by its very nature, seems to add a certain immortal quality to human life. Good men, by virtue of their goodness, seem to be of supreme worth. Thus it would seem that if Socrates shared the same ultimate doom as Alcibiades, Jesus as Judas, Paul as Nero, Gandhi as Hitler, that something precious would be irretrievably lost. This argument for immortality from the nature and apparent objec-

<sup>3</sup> Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 401. Used by permission.



tivity of values does not guarantee the possibility but it adds tremendously to the probability.

The evidences of purpose in the universe and in history as disclosed by the second, and, above all, by the fourth clue, and man as the chief carrier of that purpose, adds even more to his chances of survival beyond the grave. Man, and the development of his higher capacities, mental, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual, as we have seen, seems to be the end toward which this long and costly process is driving. And if he and the development of his higher capacities are the end, then it stands to reason that something achieved at such a cost and as the result of such a tremendous effort will not be left to the mercy of the accident of death. As the level of nature with its order and vital processes was the next level beyond chaos, and history the next level beyond nature, so immortality may be the next step beyond history in this vast evolutionary process. At any rate this interpretation does not do violence to the facts; it is really the only view of history which makes sense.

Even the fifth clue, in that it reveals man as a creature who can think synoptically, that is, in terms of the meaning of the whole, in so far as it reveals man's significance as the only creature who can think in universal and ultimate terms, also brings its tithe of evidence. However, as Brightman has conclusively shown, the crucial evidence of immortality is the fact and the character of God.<sup>4</sup> If God really exists, and if He is benevolent and just, then He must bestow immortality upon men, that is, on those at least who qualify through their worthiness, through their devotion to deathless ideals. The third clue, the irrational and evil facts, when considered in connection with all the other clues, including the sixth, drives us to belief in immortality as a rea-

<sup>4</sup> Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 400-404.

sonable certainty. Only in this way can the justice of God as well as His love be vindicated.

It is interesting to observe that it was by this route that the Hebrews, that is at least some of the writers of the Old Testament, finally arrived at the belief in personal immortality. The early Hebrews and even most of the Old Testament writers believed that the dead went down to Sheol, a vast cave at the center of the earth where they carried on a dreary, valueless existence, flitting about mournfully like bats. Failing to find justice in the immediate situation or even the near future, Israel's prophets were driven to the belief in a glorious Messianic Age. Soon, however, they came to realize that the Messianic Age would benefit only those who lived during the time of the Messiah. All who had lived before, including the ancient worthies such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Moses, the great Deliverer, would have no adequate reward for their sacrifices. Thus the justice of God Himself was at stake. Again, the writer of the Book of Job observed that often as not the righteous suffer as much and sometimes even more than the wicked. As a result, the Hebrews came to believe that at least the very greatest and best men of the past would be favored with the privilege of resurrection. Finally, however, they were driven by the same type of reasoning to the idea of a general resurrection of all mankind. Jesus and Paul, together with later Christian thinkers who combined Greek with Hebrew ideas, spiritualized this belief in a general resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

It seems, then, that the Hebrew mind, with its high regard for history, was on the right track in reasoning from

<sup>5</sup> For an illuminating account of the development of the Hebrew-Christian idea of immortality, see H. E. Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 247-98.

the belief in the goodness of God to the hope of immortality. At any rate, when one considers the injustices of history in the light of God's perfect ideal of justice and love, that is, when one considers the third clue and the sixth together, immortality seems to be the only adequate answer. This, the seventh clue, seems to be the missing piece which makes the jigsaw puzzle of life and of history intelligible. Immortality alone, of course, is not sufficient to explain the sorrows and tragedies of time. If God is both good and omnipotent, it is extremely doubtful whether He would punish man during this earthly existence with all the horrors with which history abounds. An omnipotent and benevolent God would not force man to suffer like this just to earn a greater reward in heaven. The existence of evil, and on such a vast scale, as has been shown, can only be explained in terms of a God who is limited in power but not necessarily in goodness. The hope of immortality, however, does cast light on the dark problem of evil. It justifies creation, since God then has infinite time in which to eliminate evil and to insure the triumph of goodness.

Likewise, the seventh clue sheds light on the problem of the ultimate doom. If, after ten billion years or so, the earth can no longer sustain life, still God has not been defeated. He has achieved the most important part of His great plan. He has succeeded in creating a family of spirits who can share the bliss and resources of His boundless Grace with Him, and who can continue to develop infinitely in terms of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Holiness, in which the greatest worth, dignity, and value of life consists. Thus history would be fulfilled in eternity just as nature finds its fulfilment, that for which it was created, in history.

History, then, seen as a whole, seems to justify the belief in immortality. Great and significant things are begun here

which can never be finished here. After ages of travail, man appears with capacities for an order of life of which the animal does not even dream; but most human beings die before they have really had a chance to live. Myriads, since the dawn of history, have perished in infancy before they had any opportunity to develop their potentialities; and other myriads perished just when they were flowering into manhood and womanhood, or, having arrived at the stage of maturity, died just when they were ready to make their contribution to the sum total of human good. Millions, as we have been in our consideration of the third clue, have been so oppressed and suppressed and thwarted and twisted and hindered by life's outrageous misfortunes that, in spite of being gifted, they were able to produce little or nothing of real worth. Finally, many, like the aged Kant, after a long life of worthy achievement, have confessed near the end that their work was still in a fragmentary stage, still hopelessly incomplete. For as we discovered in our consideration of the second clue, man finds himself pursued and challenged by deathless ideals of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Holiness which he can never realize here but for which he needs eternity. Hence it is not too much to suppose that we are here witnessing the beginnings, the first acts of a tremendous and significant drama. Nature is the first act, history the second, and these seem to indicate that there are other and even greater acts to follow. Surely this great process that we call history cannot fail to have ultimate meaning. All the teleological facts indicate that it must have momentous import. Yet only in the light of the seventh clue does it really make sense. Without immortality it is like a play with a plot so tremendous as to require many acts, but which ceases with the first two acts, leaving the spectators disappointed and dazed.

It seems, then, that the ultimate fulfilment of history must lie beyond history. There must be other and far greater acts in this tremendous drama; but at this point there arises an objection which must be considered. Since the truly crucial reason for belief in immortality is the fact of God, the truth of the seventh clue resting in the final analysis on the sixth, it may be contended that a limited God does not have enough power to insure immortality. In answer, it may well be said that a God capable of creating a universe as great and complex as ours must have vast power at His command; and, above all, a God capable of creating man in the first place must have sufficient power to sustain and preserve him. After all, the greatest miracle is not that we should live again after having lived here and now. The greatest miracle is that we are living here and now, taking our little part in the great drama of history, having never lived before. Moreover, as has been observed before, if God is altogether good, as the sixth clue seems to show, it is doubtful if God would keep on creating if He is not also able to preserve. If time has any meaning for God, as it seems to have, then it would seem that the endless appearance and disappearance and extinction of individuals would only add to His sorrows, not to His joys. In short, it would seem, then, that, in spite of certain limitations, God has ample power to preserve men. Hence history must find its ultimate fulfilment beyond history.<sup>6</sup>

#### BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

As every traveler and student knows, on the Italian coast there is the rock, Scylla, opposite the whirlpool, Charybdis, off the Sicilian coast. In ancient times these were often per-

<sup>6</sup> For an interesting presentation of immortality as the goal of history, see G. Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 550-90.



sonified as monsters. Hence the proverbial expression, "between Scylla and Charybdis." At this juncture we, too, must, figuratively speaking, pass between Scylla and Charybdis.

Scylla represents the modern secular, materialistic, this-worldly view. This is the view of both theoretical and practical atheism and secularism, that this present physical and phenomenal world alone is real and that this present life alone matters. Obviously it is based upon the fallacious idea that only what can be sensed is real. If this were true, then all that is most truly human, which most sharply separates man from the brute—reflective thought, ideals, and mystical experiences—would be illusions. In short, all man's higher capacities would have no ultimate meaning. However, in the light of the second and fourth clues, it has become clear that these capacities point to superhuman ideals which man does not invent and which discover him more truly than he discovers them. It has also been shown that the development of these higher capacities seems to be the purpose and goal of the historical process. Hence they must have ultimate significance. Moreover, if there is purpose in history, then the ultimate reality must be God, and therefore atheism, materialism, and secularism are false. Finally, it has become apparent in the light of the first six clues that the ultimate goal of history must lie beyond history; for only on this basis does history really become intelligible. Thus in the light of the seventh clue, the solely this-worldly view becomes untenable.

Certainly, in the face of the tragedy of death which awaits every individual sooner or later, and in the light of the ultimate doom, the atheistic and secularistic view can only lead to final despair. Again, Sorokin and others have shown that our materialistic culture, since it denies the

absoluteness of ideals, is sick unto death, and that unless this disease is cured and cured speedily, civilization will be destroyed.<sup>7</sup> In short, the completely this-worldly view is the rock Scylla, which must be avoided if civilization is to escape shipwreck.

Having escaped Scylla we must also take heed to avoid Charybdis, the ascetic or other-worldly view. According to this view, this present earthly life has no real value in itself. It is valuable only as a preparation for the next life. Time does not count, but only eternity. This world is a stony desert through which the soul must pass as quickly as possible with its eye ever on the fair mansions above. As a philosophy of history, this view tends toward illusionism and mundane pessimism. But it is inadequate, since it shatters against the force of the argument for the reality and importance of time which was presented in our discussion of the first clue. It is also reasonable to suppose that since God created this earth, it must have some intrinsic value of its own. Otherwise it would seem that God would never have created it but would have placed His great family of human spirits in a purely spiritual environment from the very beginning. Something important must be taking place here in terms of unique values achieved which are impossible anywhere else. Among these, undoubtedly, are all the finer things associated with sex. Moreover, it is well to remember that Jesus and all the rest of the greatest teachers of mankind had far more to say about forgetful human service, here in the midst of time, than about the life to come. In other words, it is only as we make the best of this present

<sup>7</sup> See P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*, pp. 19-22, 123, 324-26. However, Sorokin is no fatalist. He rejects Spengler's thesis, for he holds that after this present "sensate" culture has disintegrated, another and better may arise from its ruins; see pp. 23-25.

world that we become worthy and ready for another and higher.

It was during the Middle Ages that the extremely other-worldly view was dominant, with so many dehumanizing effects. Just at present there is little danger of its again gaining the ascendancy. In fact, most men are altogether too worldly and secularly minded. However, if the present world crisis continues, as the international scene becomes more and more chaotic, men may become disillusioned enough to fall back upon some form of other-worldliness. This has always been a dominant trend within the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the same thing is also true of the Roman Catholic Church, though to a lesser degree. There have also been similar tendencies in Protestantism, especially among Lutherans. Moreover, the present tendency toward Barthianism and Neo-Orthodoxy often leads toward other-worldliness. Someday there may be a real danger that Christians may again become preoccupied with the coming glories of another world, give up the struggle for human betterment, and once more reduce religion to something of an opiate. As a result, fascist dictators might find it easy to ride to power in so-called Christian countries. There is no doubt but that the Lutheran preoccupation with the "spiritual" in isolation from temporal responsibility made it easy for Hitler to arise in Germany.

It is evident, then, that both the rock, Scylla, and the dangerous whirlpool, Charybdis, must be avoided. Man cannot live in terms of today, in terms of the temporal and the changing alone. Nor can he live in the eternal and neglect the temporal. As a citizen of two worlds, he must do justice to both. Time must not be despised, for "the earth is the Lord's and its fulness, the world and those who dwell there-

in,"<sup>8</sup> and here upon this green earth it is possible to achieve certain unique values which probably cannot be realized anywhere else. More than that, it is very likely to be true that only those who make the best of their present opportunities upon this earth will be found worthy of a higher life in a spiritual and heavenly world. This present world, however, is certainly something more than just a training ground for the next. Even if it is not the most important part of the Divine Kingdom, it is certainly one of the many provinces or mansions.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, for man to be content with this present world is for him to turn a deaf ear to his deepest longings and to disregard the highest possibilities inherent within his nature. It is to become a groveling earthling and to vainly attempt to turn the stream of evolution back in the direction of animal contentment with the fleeting present. Moreover, it can lead to nothing but the blackest despair in the end, since man must then face the gloomy prospect, not only of the extinction of his individual personality together with its values at death, but also ultimately the extinction of all values in the wreck and ruin of the vast cosmic death. However, as we have seen, this interpretation of history is not reasonable or necessary. As history does not seem to make sense without the sixth clue, the limited God as ultimate Cause, so, likewise, it does not seem to make sense without the seventh clue, immortality as the ultimate goal.

<sup>8</sup> Psa. 24:1.

<sup>9</sup> For Toynbee's interesting presentation of this view, see his *Civilization on Trial*, p. 263.





PART IV  
APPLICATION



## Chapter 10

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND THE PRESENT WORLD CRISIS

#### WHERE PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION HAVE FAILED

There have been times when philosophy has been content to remain in its ivory tower, content to speculate serenely and peacefully far above the noise and confusion of the ordinary humdrum world. Since philosophy is concerned chiefly with ultimate truth, some have even insisted that the philosopher must not concern himself with the problems of society but must rather leave them to the statesman and the reformer. Nor must he sully his philosophic mantle by mingling with the multitudes in the market place. His place is apart from the busy rush of the world where he may calmly and serenely view the truth.

There have also been times when religion has been unconcerned with the present world. The seeker after God must interest himself in finding God and preparing his soul for another world. God cannot be found amid the sin and tumult of this present evil world. To find God and save his soul the godly man must dwell apart. The fact that men are hating and warring, and women are weeping, while death stalks abroad, is no concern to him. Out under the desert stars or on the serenity of the mountain's top, lost in the beatific vision and in the contemplation of eternity, the saint can transcend and forget the sorrows of time.

Thus under the spell of a more or less illusionistic view of history, the great fault of both philosophy and religion,

at times, has been that of detachment from life. They have, in fact, at times degenerated into little more than forms of escapism. By refusing to shoulder their mutual responsibility manfully, they have not given men the light and power which they together possess, and helpless humanity, led by its blind, opportunistic leaders, has often stumbled to the very edge of the abyss of destruction.

But, as a matter of fact, both philosophy and religion are fundamentally related to life. Both arose out of man's awe and wonder at the mystery of existence, and out of the need of the human mind and soul for light and power, knowledge and faith, to meet the challenges of life and death effectively and with dignity. It is also true that during their great creative periods both philosophy and religion have concerned themselves with the desperate human predicament. Plato could engage in the sublimest flights of speculation in his contemplation of the beautiful Forms, but nevertheless no one was more concerned about the contributions which philosophy might make to the welfare of the state. The theme of his *Republic* is, in fact, the nature of justice, not as it exists in its essence in heaven, but as it is realized in a just state. It was Plato who wrote:

Unless either philosophers become kings in their countries or those who are now called kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a genuine desire for wisdom; unless, that is to say, political power and philosophy meet together, while the many natures who now go their several ways in the one or the other direction are forcibly debarred from doing so, there can be no rest from troubles, . . . for states, nor yet, as I believe, for all mankind.<sup>1</sup>

The prophets of Israel were greatly concerned with the welfare of the state. Likewise Jesus went out upon the

<sup>1</sup> *The Republic of Plato*, Book V, 473, trans. and ed. Francis M. Cornford (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 174. Used by permission.

mountain to pray, only to return with renewed vigor to teach and to heal the multitude who, to his compassionate eye, were "bewildered and dejected, like sheep that have no shepherd."<sup>2</sup> Finally, when it became clear that the city which he loved and tried to save from doom would reject him, he wept over it, crying out in anguish: "If you yourself only knew today the conditions of peace!"<sup>3</sup>

### THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

In other ages, philosophy and religion could remain detached from life if they chose to do so. Sages and monks could flee to the mountains or to the desert or to some peaceful land far beyond the pale of disaster. But today there are no mountains, no deserts, and no lands faraway enough to insure a peaceful haven. Modern technology has made the world one. Therefore the present crisis is world-wide. It concerns not only Americans and Russians but all mankind.

There have been other crises that have been crucial. When Rome fell to the barbarians in 410 A.D., it shocked thinking men profoundly. It was this shock, as we have seen, which caused St. Augustine to write his immortal *City of God*.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, to the mass of the Romans, the fall of the queenly city to the rough, uncouth barbarians seemed to mark the end of civilization. In fact, it looked like the end of the world. Again, during the fifth century when Attila, the Hun, threatened to make Europe a desert, and worse yet, when during the fourteenth century the bloodthirsty Tamerlane threatened to turn the very earth into one vast graveyard, it seemed to many that Armageddon was at hand. Finally, there was the terrible Black Death which devastated Europe during that same fourteenth cen-

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 9:36-37.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 19:42.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2, page 28.



tury, taking a toll of some twenty-five million lives on that continent alone, and as it spread eastward to China, some thirteen million Chinese perished. H. G. Wells thinks that the Black Death came nearer to wiping out the human race than any other evil that has ever visited this planet.<sup>5</sup> Yet mankind survived all these disasters and flourishes today as never before.

Nevertheless, today the human race faces a threat, a possible disaster, before which all others in ages past seem to pale into comparative insignificance. Some even contend that not only civilization but also the very existence of man himself is threatened. Whereas nature was largely responsible for the Black Death, man, not nature, is primarily responsible for the possible catastrophe which hangs over his head like a sword of Damocles.

Here in essence is the dismal picture as given by realistic scientists. The atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima killed not fewer than 80,000 Japanese, and others are still dying, to this very day, from the aftereffects. This type of bomb is, however, already obsolete. By now the United States and Russia may have bombs powerful enough to kill a million people, and it will not be long before other nations will have similar bombs.<sup>6</sup> Besides the atomic bomb, there is bacterial warfare which some scientists fear even more than atomic warfare. Among the many deadly killers which the governments of the so-called civilized world are breeding, one of the worst is tularemia. Some scientists go so far as to

<sup>5</sup> See H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, pp. 712-13.

<sup>6</sup> One of the best sources of information on the subject is *One World or None*, ed. by D. Masters and K. Way, in which such top scientists as Einstein, Urey, Condon, Bohr, and other express their views. Other books by experts, but in simple, nontechnical language, are D. Q. Posin, *I Have Been to the Village*, and D. Bradley, *No Place to Hide*. J. Hersey's *Hiroshima* is a graphic description of what actually took place when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

say that a teaspoon of these germs sprayed from an airplane is capable of causing an epidemic that may kill ten million people.<sup>7</sup>

Not only the physical and biological and medical scientists but sober historians as well are warning the people and their leaders of the impending danger. In fact, Toynbee goes so far as to say:

The new aspect of war is already familiar to Western minds. We are aware that the atom bomb and our many other new lethal weapons are capable, in another war, of wiping out not merely the belligerents but the whole human race.<sup>8</sup>

As Toynbee has also pointed out, the most urgent task, if we are to avoid calamity, is the political task of getting Russia and the United States together and of transforming the United Nations as quickly as possible into a real world government.<sup>9</sup> The political or rather the political-economic crisis, then, must be met with effective political and economic means, and since this crisis is world-wide, it must be dealt with on a world basis. It may be added that since statesmen usually apply adequate remedies too late, the great role which the philosopher and the religious leader can play in this crisis is that of arousing the people to the danger, and thus forcing the hands of their political leaders.

Toynbee, unlike many other modern historians and philosophers, clearly recognizes that the political-economic crisis is a symptom of something deeper. Beneath it yawns

<sup>7</sup> See D. Q. Posin, "A Scientist Looks at the Problem of Peace," *North Dakota State Engineer*, XXIII, No. 3 (April, 1948); see also T. Rosenberg, "Notes on the Possible Contributions of Biological Warfare ("BW") to a World War III," *Social Questions Bulletin*, December, 1948.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 25. Used by permission.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

the chasm of the spiritual crisis.<sup>10</sup> Many outstanding thinkers join with Toynbee in insisting that the basic cause of mankind's sickness is spiritual.<sup>11</sup> One of the most interesting of these, in certain respects, is W. T. Stace, Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. Frankly admitting that he believes in no religion whatever, yet he insists that the fundamental cause of man's present predicament is his loss of faith in God and the consequent abandonment of the spiritual or teleological interpretation of life.<sup>12</sup>

But one of the great lessons of history is the fact that men cannot live without some object of highest devotion, without a God or gods. Even the most sophisticated who reject theism have their idol or idols. Many of them have made an idol of science, and are discovering to their sorrow that science, divorced from religion and ethics, can become a virtual Moloch. For the masses of the people, there is always the danger that Caesar, the glorified nation, will take the place of God. This is what happened in the Axis countries, and it can happen in America as well.<sup>13</sup> Marxian communism is a gospel for many, especially in Russia and in China, but in both of these countries it is undoubtedly strongly mixed with nationalism. At any rate, the great danger today is another holocaust resulting largely from the devotion to these false gods.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*; and D. E. Trueblood, *The Predicament of Modern Man*.

<sup>12</sup> See W. T. Stace, "Man Against Darkness," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXXII, No. 3 (September, 1948), pp. 53-58.

<sup>13</sup> Most Americans do not realize how real this danger is. The more militaristic the nation becomes, the greater will be the danger to our liberties. This is the lesson of history to which we must give heed. Militarism and war are the two greatest enemies of freedom.

<sup>14</sup> This writer realizes that there are many causes of war: economic want and rivalry, nationalism and the international chaos, militarism, and propaganda. Still the lack of faith in God and the loss of belief in a Divine

## THE NEED OF A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

How did the modern world get this way? Why has it rejected the theism of the Jewish-Christian tradition and substituted these shallow, cheap, dangerous secular cults? To answer this question, one must go back some five hundred years to the Renaissance and the advent of the new science. Before the Renaissance and the advent of the new science, the masses had a *Weltanschauung* and a philosophy of history which insured a measure of unity and stability in Christendom and a real protection against the cults of nationalism.

This *Weltanschauung* and philosophy of history was based upon a literal interpretation of the Bible as an infallible book. History was conceived as a Divine Drama beginning with the creation of the world by divine fiat about six thousand years ago. After the creation of the physical universe, the vegetable and the animal kingdoms followed, and, finally, the creation of man by special divine action. The Golden Age was conceived as in the past. The earth and all that was in it was perfect, and man lived in bliss until he ate of the forbidden fruit; but by this single act of disobedience he brought a curse upon himself, upon all his descendents, and even upon the world of nature. Worse yet, man's sin forced a just God to condemn him to an eternal hell. But God, being loving as well as just, took pity

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Purpose in history is in a sense the most basic, and it is closely related to the other causes, especially the rise and dominance of nationalism. Man cannot do without an absolute, and if God is rejected, the way is opened for the various nationalisms as absolutes. It must also be remembered, however, that narrow, tribal conceptions of God may be even more dangerous than belief in no God; for they lead to the union of religious zeal with nationalism and militarism. This unholy trinity has caused some of the greatest atrocities in history.

on man and in accordance with a preconceived plan, based upon His foreknowledge, began to prepare the way for a Savior. The Prophets heralded his coming, and all the processes of history served as a preparation. In the fulness of time, Christ appeared, lived, taught, suffered, and died upon a cross, and by means of his death made atonement for man. Christ rose from the dead, appeared to his disciples for a brief season, and ascended to a physical heaven a few miles above the earth from which he would some day return to judge the quick and the dead. When he returns, this present earth shall pass away, and in its place a new heaven and a new earth will appear in the glory which the present earth possessed before the curse. The righteous shall dwell with Christ and God in eternal bliss, while the wicked shall be tortured eternally in a quite literal hell. Fundamental to this view is also the belief that Christ, while upon earth, set up the church as a kind of divine corporation whose chief function is to serve as an ark of safety for the faithful and to dole out grace and salvation during the interim between his ascension and his triumphal return.

Of course, this view is only a crude popular version of the *Weltanschauung* and philosophy of history of St. Augustine. It is the old traditional form of apocalypticism; but for a thousand years it remained intact, serving as a world view and philosophy of history for the masses who comprised Christendom. In spite of its many weaknesses, it was at least consistent, that is, in the light of the limited knowledge of the day, and it gave meaning and purpose to human life. But as we have already seen, the old apocalypticism is hopelessly inadequate. It does not fit in with the world picture as presented by science. Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, and the rest undermined the view of the physical universe upon which it rested, while Biblical scholars exposed



the errors and weaknesses of the supposed infallible book. As a result, in our day the old view is on its last legs.<sup>15</sup>

Thoughtful theists no longer mourn the passing of the old narrow view. To many, in fact, its passing has come as a liberation, for theism is not dependent on the old world view with its apocalyptic conception of history. Rather, the passing of the old theory has left the ground clear for a more adequate structure. Yet who can doubt that its passing has left a spiritual vacuum in the hearts and minds of many? Worse yet, many of the so-called leaders in both philosophy and religion lack a clear perspective. They are hopelessly confused in this critical hour of decision when humanity needs direction as never before. As a result, the plight of the masses, spiritually speaking, is nothing short of tragic. While a few find a deeper, a more rational, and a more satisfying faith, the many continue to drift, hopeless and helpless, over a dark uncertain sea. Among these are many of our political leaders, who, lacking the stabilizing power of an adequate philosophy and the vision and dynamic of religious insight, have sold out to a shallow, materialistic, dangerous opportunism. Too many who occupy Caesar's seat among the nations are little more than blind leaders of the blind. Devoid of basic principles, incapable of thinking in broad, world terms, they are also incapable of formulating the kind of policy so sorely needed in this, the atomic age. Again, lacking a faith based upon the conviction that, notwithstanding appearances during tragic moments, there is reason and purpose in history, they tend to become cynical, to take the inevitability of war for granted, and thus the old sordid game of naked power politics continues.

The quest for an adequate philosophy of history, then, is important and urgent. The breakdown of the old *Weltan-*

<sup>15</sup> For previous criticisms of apocalypticism, see Chapter 8, pages 201-2.

*schauung*, together with the chaos and confusion following in the wake of the two greatest wars in history, is making it exceedingly difficult for men to find their way. Lacking the strong religious conviction which characterized other generations, it is easy for them to surrender to a shallow, thoughtless fatalism. Fatalism, in fact, seems to have been the dominant philosophy of a large number of soldiers during the recent war, and judging by such signs as the demand for astrological magazines and the widespread belief that war is inevitable, fatalism is still one of the most influential philosophies of our times.

A philosophy of history adequate for these times must meet two crucial tests. First of all, it must show that history and life really make sense, that they are intelligible. The destruction of the old world view, together with the present political-economic crisis, has caused many to feel that there is really no basic meaning in history and life, and it has badly confused others. Hence we drift toward doom. The second test is pragmatic and practical—is it capable of inspiring men with courage and hope and creative energy, so that, instead of giving way to fatalism, they will arise, gird up their loins, and wrestle with destiny? In the preceding chapters, in our consideration of the clues, we discovered much to lead us to believe that history does really make sense and that it can inspire us with hope. It remains, in the next and final chapter, to put this conviction to a final test by an application of all the clues to history as a whole.

## Chapter 11

### THE NATURE AND MEANING OF HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF THE SEVEN CLUES

#### HISTORY IS INTELLIGIBLE

In the last chapter due consideration was given to the present crisis which confronts mankind and the relation of the philosophy of history to the crisis. The crisis, as we have seen, has two fundamental aspects. The first is primarily political and economic and must be solved by the application of effective political and economic means. The second is the deeper philosophical and religious crisis. The old traditional Christian world view, which once gave unity and meaning and value to history and life, has been hopelessly undermined. As a result, modern man finds himself in a confused world which does not seem to make sense. The universe seems dark, mysterious, even terrifying; and history, in which man is the chief actor, seems not so much a Divine Drama with a purpose and a goal but it appears to many as a confused mass of events without rhyme or reason. In fact, it seems to be nothing short of a stark tragedy, now in its last and most tragic act of all.

What modern man desperately needs then, we discovered, is a world view and a philosophy of history which can take the place of the old, which has been shattered. It must, like the old view, find history intelligible; that is, if such is possible in the very nature of things. In other words, since modern man is realistic, it cannot be based merely upon man's dreams, however beautiful, nor on his hopes, however

inspiring. It must be based upon the facts, and it must be comprehensive and coherent in the widest and truest sense.

In this inquiry the purpose has been to find such a philosophy of history if possible. Nor have our expectations been disappointed. For in the discussion of each of the seven clues, it became increasingly clear that history is not altogether an enigma; it does make sense.

One of the tasks that remain is to briefly consider each of the seven clues, as well as the clues in their totality, in relation to history as a whole. One fact stands out—the first five clues are really empirical; they are drawn from the process of history itself as it has impressed itself upon the reflective human mind. Thus the first clue—history seems a manifestation of the ultimate—is based upon the fact that this is not only the way that it impresses a few thinkers, but it is also the way in which history has always impressed the vast majority of the greatest philosophers of history. The consideration of this truth claim led us in turn to a consideration of the metaphysical reality of time, since history is essentially temporal; that is, it is intelligible only as we assume the fact of past, present, and future. The consequent investigation led us to the conclusion that time must have metaphysical reality. Hence history must be a revelation of the ultimate, and since time is teleological by nature and has meaning only for mind, even at this stage of the argument, the existence of God, the great Mind, as the ultimate cause, appeared at least as a strong probability.

The second clue—history demands consideration of man—is just as true and necessary as the first. Man is the chief actor, interpreter, and object of history. Natural events give way to historical events with the emergence of man. Hence, any investigation of the ultimate meaning of history involves man, his origin, nature, and significance. In man

we discovered a strange dualism. On the one hand, there is his higher nature. Man is essentially mind and soul, seeking an invisible world of meaning in terms of ideals of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Holiness. Moreover, the very fact that in mind, which is found in man alone, a key was found to the mystery of the relation of permanence and change, these two basic characteristics of the universe and of history, made us again suspect that the ultimate must be Mind, since mind alone can bind them together as two aspects of a living whole. Nevertheless, side by side with his higher nature, there is also man's lower nature, his irrational and evil inclinations which ever struggle with the higher for mastery. This proved to be the beginning of the strange dilemma of history rising out of the dualism evident within history. It is this dilemma which has puzzled so many minds and has often left them positivists and agnostics, and even atheists and fatalists.

This led to the third clue: history demands consideration of the irrational factors. This clue again is just as real and as empirical as the rest. Here we saw the lower nature of man as it actually expresses itself upon the stage of history in terms of the many forms of savagery and inhuman cruelty, and also the endless perversions and corruptions. We also began to see that man does not create his own lower nature nor certain of the rules of the game, such as the struggle for existence. Man discovers them and must make the best of them, but he does not create them. They seem to rise out of the basic process of life and of history. Hence we began to suspect that if there is a great rational and benevolent Mind and Will operating behind the scenes of historical phenomena which makes possible such rational factors as the higher nature of man and his ideal experiences, it stands to reason that there must also be some ultimate



irrational factor to account for the irrational facts. In other words, if the rational has metaphysical validity, so must the irrational, for both arise out of the same basic process which lies at the roots of life and of history.

The fourth clue, history demands consideration of signs of purpose, is just as empirical as the third and even more basic and fundamental. The creative advance toward order and unity operating across perhaps ten billion years, the growth of values for about a billion, the power of ideals and idealists, moral law and judgment, together with the evidences of providence, are so apparent and weighty that only the blindest and most dogmatic skeptic could attempt to deny their existence as in some sense aspects of the ultimate. For it stands to reason that if the dysteleological factors have metaphysical meaning, the teleological, by virtue of their basic and preponderant nature, must have even more. Hence it became clear that history must be interpreted in terms of some form of theism.

The fifth clue, history demands perspective and synopsis, arose not only out of the dilemma in which the apparent dualism in history had placed us but also out of the fact that historical events and processes are, in fact, related. No event has meaning in utter isolation, and, to understand history as a whole, there must be a synoptic vision of the whole. Wholly isolated events are as meaningless as wholly isolated atoms and sensations if there are such. Perspective and synopsis alone constitute the key which is capable of opening the door to the ultimate secret of history, that is, so far as its comprehension is possible to our weak, limited human minds.

It is clear, then, that the five empirical clues are really empirical; they were drawn from history itself as it affects the reflective human mind. The two ultimate clues, that is,

the sixth—history demands a limited God as ultimate Cause—and the seventh—history demands immortality as ultimate goal—were in turn drawn from reflection upon the five empirical clues. The sixth, the limited God, proved the only rational solution to the dualism in man and in history.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the seventh clue, immortality, proved the only rational solution to such remaining problems as the ultimate doom and the fate of individuals within history.<sup>2</sup>

In short, when history is thus viewed in the light of all seven clues, it really appears intelligible. History may be ultimately meaningless for all that, but the burden of proof certainly rests heavily upon the skeptics and agnostics. The probabilities are very decidedly against the belief of many that ultimate reality is purposeless. Why human reason should ever arise in an irrational universe, and why it should play such an important part upon the stage of history, the skeptics have a hard time explaining. Moreover, the limited God, together with immortality, provide a reasonable solution to the problem of evil.

There will be those, of course, in both the naturalistic and in the Neo-Orthodox camps, who will insist that this version of history is an oversimplification. If by oversimplification they mean that we do not consider all of the vast array of facts since the world began—the most minute and insignificant as well as the most fundamental and significant—we plead guilty to the charge. This is impossible in the very nature of the case; and not only is it impossible, but as has been pointed out before, it is also unnecessary.<sup>3</sup> One does not have to consider the infinite number of infinitesimal facts in order to grasp the essential nature of a process. In

<sup>1</sup> The argument is not repeated here since it was stated at length in Chapter 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 9 for the argument.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 1, pages 14-15.

fact, such preoccupation with insignificant details is to fall into all the errors of using analysis alone as a method of finding truth.\* The mind becomes so fixed on details that it fails to grasp their real relationship and meaning. In short, in order to understand the essential nature of history, the important thing is to give due consideration to the really fundamental facts, characteristics, and tendencies, and this we have tried to do. In no case have we shut our eyes to any important facts, no matter how ugly and unpleasant. We conclude, then, that in spite of its complexity and its elements of mystery, history is fundamentally intelligible.

### HISTORY INSPIRES HOPE

Men, as we discovered in Chapter 10, also need a philosophy of history capable of inspiring them with hope. The great danger is that men, oppressed by the world's misery and chaos, drift into a paralyzing fatalism. Of course, if some form of fatalism is the only possible interpretation of history, if the message of history is really a message of doom, then we must accept our fate and try to make the best of it. Nevertheless it has been shown that all forms of fatalism are basically inadequate as interpretations of history.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, history, as we have seen, is intelligible and fundamentally rational, purposive; it seems to be nothing short of a teleological process whose goal is the realization and the development of values. If this is really true, as it appears to be, then it can inspire men with hope.

The historic interpretations, however, have failed at one of two points. Either they were too optimistic and did not

<sup>4</sup> For the criticisms of analysis conceived as the sole method, see Chapter 7, pages 189-92.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 8, pages 206-9.

take the dysteleological facts seriously enough, or else they took them too seriously, and failing to see the real significance of the teleological facts, took the dark road of futility and fatalism. By means of the sixth clue, the limited God, we were able to provide a reasonable answer to the problem of the dualism which history manifests. This conception of the limited God, far more than any absolutistic conception, is also capable of challenging men to resist, overcome, and eradicate evil. Evil is not conceived as in any sense willed by God, or as an unknown good. Evil is the enemy of man and must be, always and everywhere, resisted and challenged and eradicated! God Himself is leading men in the fight and is calling on all men of good will to rally to His side and to assist Him in the tremendous struggle. Nor is God, of necessity, impotent or powerless simply because He encounters obstacles. The very fact of the creative advance toward unity and order, and the increase and growth in values, together with all the other teleological facts, shows how successful He has been in the past, and leads us to the conviction that He is capable of guiding the forces of righteousness to eventual triumph. Moreover, the seventh clue, immortality, indicates that God has eternity in which to complete what He has begun here. If He cannot completely triumph within history, then eventual triumph is possible beyond history. Death and tragedy and doom cannot finally defeat God. This interpretation of history inspires men with hope.

There will be those who will doubtless dub this as liberalism and will even charge the writer with all the fallacies of the old doctrine of inevitable progress. The writer is not afraid to avow his undaunted faith as a liberal; but let those who may choose to criticize the point of view presented here remember that this is a liberalism that has

been sobered, that it aims to be critical and empirical. It is a liberalism that tries to face all the facts, both good and bad, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant. The writer is convinced that the hope of the future is dependent upon some form of liberalism such as this, which is grounded on fact and which at the same time is also capable of inspiring men with hope and arousing them to creative action, to grapple with destiny.

### A VISION OF HISTORY

However, like Plato, the writer believes that men can never completely unveil the ultimate mysteries; and with both Plato and St. Paul, he can only humbly say that perhaps in heaven alone is this possible. Yet even here on earth, as Plato insisted, we certainly have semblances of Reality. Again, some of these semblances or images or visions are far more adequate and expressive of the true nature of the Real than are others. Thus we are not left to wander in total darkness. Sometimes Plato tried to picture ultimate mysteries in terms of myths; but he also held that there were times when the soul, in a synoptic vision, caught a glimpse of the Real, reminding it of its divine origin and nature. Certainly there is nothing more significant and wonderful than the mind's ability to look at the whole of things, and its daring attempts to guess the ultimate secret. Perhaps there is no better way to close this inquiry into the ultimate meaning and significance of history than with such an attempt at a synoptic vision of history as a whole from the perspective of eternity, that is as it may appear to God. Inadequate as this endeavor must of necessity be, yet it may also, in the final analysis, prove rewarding. Here, then, is the drama of history as it may ap-



pear from the lofty perspective of God, the Divine Dramatist and Ultimate Cause.

Eons ago, before there was life, before there was an earth or a universe or even any visible semblance of order, the great Spirit of God dwelt alone. There were only two things which disturbed God's otherwise perfect bliss. The first was a dark, wild, recalcitrant element within His own experience which was as eternal as He Himself. Men long afterwards called it by various names, Tiamat (the primeval watery chaos conceived as a monster), the Devil or Adversary, Fate or Necessity, the Receptacle, the Drag, the Given, or simply the Irrational Element or Elements. At times the Eternal Spirit was also conscious of loneliness; He longed to express His creative power by calling into existence creatures who could think His thoughts after Him, who could share the richness of His life, creatures whom He could love and who would seek His fellowship.

The great Spirit knew that if He was to realize His dream, He would have to utilize the Irrational Element, and that under the guidance of His mind and purpose and Will, even the energies of its wild chaotic urges had vast potentialities for good. It was this realization which caused Him to send great impulses of creative purpose through its chaotic mass. How the Creator rejoiced as He beheld the wild chaos slowly but surely giving way to the primitive nebula, the nebula to constellations of stars and suns, and at long last to a family of planets, among them our earth.

Vast and magnificent as was His universe of blazing suns, yet the earth, this tiny speck amid the boundless oceans of space, became His favorite. This should not arouse our wonder, for the Creator, unlike men, does not measure worth by size or the power to dazzle by mere brilliant dis-

plays of wild, restless energy, as is the case of the suns which burn in the vastness of the blue. In short, He saw great future possibilities on this grain of sand located in this remote corner of the universe. In fact, He gave it His special attention so that after ages of preparation had passed and the fulness of time had come, the greatest miracle had occurred here upon this humble earth. For it was here that the first living cells appeared,<sup>6</sup> strange things capable of sensitive responses to the Divine stimulus, a quality which none of the blind forces of nature, however vast, possessed. Truly guessing the wonderful possibilities of these new creations, the Creator gave them His tender care, so that, though through Necessity they continued to perish, He succeeded in continually replacing those which perished with new and often even better forms.

Thus for ages He continued His creative efforts, sometimes succeeding in marvelous ways and sometimes failing. For at first, due to the wild, Irrational Element of which He had to make use, most of His experiments went wrong. Some of the strange creatures which appeared looked so ridiculous that they made even God laugh; but others were so terrible, cruel, monstrous, and they caused Him such pain and dismay that He vowed to will them out of existence as soon as He could overcome the stark Necessity which had served to bring them into being as inevitable by-products of His creative process. Still undaunted, however, the patient God planned and toiled on, certain that He could wrest the victory from Necessity.

<sup>6</sup> That is, as far as we know. Life may also have appeared on other planets, and as far as that goes, God may have created other universes before this one; but this is, of course, pure conjecture. We do know that this universe had a beginning and that life appeared on this earth. For possibilities of life elsewhere in the universe, see J. Jeans, *The Universe Around Us*, pp. 282-84.

Finally there came the great hour—the greatest in the creative adventures of God. After ages of endeavor, like the first cells, in the fulness of time when conditions were right, man appeared. At first he could scarcely be distinguished from his animal cousins. In appearance and habit he seemed to differ little from some of them, for he was as wild, savage, and crude as any of them. Yet, to the eye of God, which sees the hearts of all creatures, here was something different, unusual, significant, full of promise. For in the presence of the great forces of nature, one day man manifested something that was more than mere animal fear. There appeared a strange light in his eyes, a curiosity different from that of the other animals, a curiosity mingled with awe and wonder and dim surmises as to the meaning of things. Soon, in his crude fashion, he began to implore the help of a Power whose existence he dimly guessed; and from his dreams he surmised that there must be another life beyond the present. He also began to adorn his caves with sketches of the animals which he hunted and, crude and grotesque as these were, yet they were prophecies of greater things to come. He still fought as savagely as the brutes, but at times there appeared faint glimmerings, vague apprehensions of a higher law than the law of nature. It was only a fitful dream as yet, but it too was a sign of better things to come, the daystar of a mighty dawn, and the Creator rejoiced over man, His noblest work.

Yet as ages rolled, along with these signs of greater things, man's cruelty continued. As he grew in intelligence, he was also able to devise greater and more cunning ways of torture. As families grew into clans and clans into tribes, organized warfare made its hideous appearance and man began to sacrifice his captives to his bloodthirsty gods. This sorely grieved the great God; for, try as He might, man did

not yet understand. But still the Creator did not become discouraged. Man's great forward strides gave Him encouragement. Here, at last, was a creature that was really beginning to think his Creator's thoughts after Him, for already crude sages were beginning, childlike, to ask great questions and to invent simple myths to explain the mystery of existence. Rude altars and temples were being built, and within the tribe, at least, under the leadership of chieftain and shaman, the law of nature was beginning to give way to a crude elemental justice.

Finally another marvelous event came to pass. The Sumerian civilization arose, the very first of its kind. It was far from perfect. Along with war, there was slavery; temple prostitution was sanctioned, the religion was polytheistic with thousands of gods, and the priestly hierarchy proved tyrannical. Yet it was this civilization which laid the foundation for other similar endeavors. In the arts and sciences, in religion, and even in ethics, certain important gains were made. In fact, in the name of one of the gods, one of the kings even undertook to reform the official corruption and to check the oppression of the poor.<sup>7</sup> With these things God was greatly pleased, and He had high hopes for Sumeria. But after a period of development and real achievement, this first civilization declined and perished, yet not without leaving a wake to serve as a guide to other future ventures.

In the meantime God succeeded in creating a second great civilization. This was the Egyptian on the banks of the Nile. The fact that it was reared on the backs of slaves pained the Creator, and He made plans to work slavery out of the great pattern which He was weaving. But for a time, along with the curse of war, He had to accept it as a brute

<sup>7</sup> See W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pp. 147-48.

fact, the result of Necessity. Yet He could not help rejoicing over the marvelous exploits of His Egyptian children. For not only did they rear magnificent palaces and temples, but, being far less materialistic than the Sumerians, they gave a large measure of attention to the life to come. More than that, strange new voices were heard among them. These were the voices of prophets calling on king and peasant alike to be just lest they prove wanting in the hour of judgment before the gods. Greatest of all, one of their kings, scorning the glories of military conquest, came to believe that there is only one true God, and he spent his life trying to promote His worship. He was the herald of a new day. Nevertheless, in spite of these things, in the end Egypt declined, due largely to the tyranny of her kings. But again, as in the case of Sumeria, it left a tremendous wake to serve as a guide for civilization yet to be.<sup>8</sup>

After the decline and fall of Sumeria, the Babylonian civilization sprang like a flower out of its ruins. While the Assyrians were militarists and consequently made few contributions,<sup>9</sup> but pained the Heart of the Creator, the Babylonians, along with a measure of cruelty, made certain contributions which delighted Him. Their priestly sages searched the heavens and not only laid the basis for a future astronomy but also worked out a cosmogony which had great consequences for ages to come. There was also ethical progress, as revealed by the famous Code of Hammurabi. What was happening in Babylon also had real import for the future.

There are evidences of God's creative stimulus in every land: In China, a great civilization arose which found its

<sup>8</sup> For an interesting account of the great contributions of Egyptian civilization, see J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*.

<sup>9</sup> For the disastrous effects of Assyrian militarism, see Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IV, pp. 44, 67, 101-3.



best expression in the sage, Confucius. Likewise in India a civilization developed, whose finest manifestations are the poets who speak to us through the Vedas, the sages who wrote the Upanishads, and the Buddha and King Asoka. For a time God also had remarkable success among the Persians. He wrought mightily through Zoroaster but was disappointed when no one responded to finish the work which Zoroaster had begun. However, among the nations of the ancient world, there were two seemingly insignificant nations which set the pattern for the future through the quality and vigor of their response.

The first of these was the Hebrew. Following the command of a God whom he hardly knew and whom he tried to picture crudely, the remote ancestor, Abraham, had left the corrupting influence of the old, decaying Sumerian civilization to settle in a strange land.<sup>10</sup> Later some of the Hebrew tribes were enslaved in Egypt, but were delivered by the hand of the great Lawgiver, Moses, who laid the foundation of the future nation and of Hebrew religion. The Hebrew nation was never important politically, nor did it make any contributions to the arts and sciences, for the land of Palestine was small and the people were poor. It was in the realm of religion that its genius lay and its contributions became classic. Inspired by the sages of Babylon, it was the Hebrews who developed the loftiest cosmogony known to the ancient world, a cosmogony which, unlike the Babylonian, is purely monotheistic. And it was through Israel's prophets that the Spirit of God was able to work mightily and more effectively than through those of any

<sup>10</sup> Of course very little is known of Abraham, but that he was a historical character seems certain from the very fact of his prominence in the Hebrew tradition. For some interesting observations about Abraham from the standpoint of the philosophy of history, see Eddy, *God in History*, pp. 52-57.

other land. Forever binding ethics and religion together in an indissoluble unity, they set the pattern which all the really creative religious development of the future was destined to follow.<sup>11</sup>

The other little nation was Greece. While Israel responded to the moral and religious challenge, Greece responded to the intellectual challenge. Here arose Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics who tried to think God's thoughts after Him and formulated mighty systems which to this day prove a bulwark against the onslaughts of skepticism. And since God is the Spirit of Truth, and reason is a divine gift which He has bestowed upon men in order that they may find the Truth and not live in darkness like the brutes, God rejoiced over Greece even as He rejoiced over Israel.

The need now arose for some great world character who could gather up within himself and express in classic form the very best insights of Israel's prophets and sages. More than that, a man was needed who was great enough to inspire a movement broad enough and deep enough to gather into one what Israel's prophets had seen and what the sages of Greece had thought. In response to this need, in the fulness of time, Jesus came and lived, taught and died, as the highest incarnation of the moral and spiritual ideal in all the history of man. How abundantly the great Spirit of God was able to pour out the vast resources of Its love and light through him! There is no wonder that men called him the Son of God, for no one ever revealed and bared the lov-

<sup>11</sup> For an interesting account, beautifully written, describing Israel's role in history, her peculiar mission and contributions, see Daniel-Rops, *Sacred History*. The critical reader will, however, discern two serious defects which mar this otherwise able book. The author accepts Hebrew tradition too literally for the most part, and his whole outlook is dominated altogether too much by the traditional view of the church.

ing Heart of the Eternal Spirit and released Its redemptive influence in the world as he did.

In the meantime the great Roman Empire had arisen, with its regard for law and order, its rough justice and tolerance, and, above all else, it had established peace through most of the known world so that men could travel with a measure of security along the highways which it had constructed. God made use of Rome as He had made use of Israel and Greece. Not only did Rome preserve the learning and culture of Greece, but she also made it possible for the missionaries of the new religion to travel the roads and the seas. Thus Christianity spread and grew. The Gentiles, especially the Greeks, responded as the Jews never did, and so, lawgiver and sage, Moses and Socrates, prophet and philosopher, Isaiah and Plato, were joined together in indissoluble unity. Thus the foundations of two future civilizations, the Orthodox Christian and our Western, were laid.

Rome had done its worst to stamp out the Christian movement, but the blood of the martyrs truly proved to be the seed of the church. The new faith spread and began to exert an influence, meliorating pagan harshness and giving the individual a sense of dignity and a great hope both for this life and the next. God was winning a great victory. Finally a Roman emperor, recognizing the bankruptcy of the old faiths, and as a stroke of political sagacity (for God can use even the selfish motives of rulers to work His purposes), made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. This, however, proved to be a mixed blessing. For while it gave the church a freedom to spread the faith which it had never enjoyed before, it also made for its corruption. From being persecuted, it now turned persecutor. And not only did it persecute the pagans without mercy, but often it

treated the so-called heretics within its midst even worse. There is no greater blot upon the church, and these things greatly grieved the Heart of the Creator.

During the centuries which followed, the Roman Empire decayed, the crude barbarians swept down from the north, confusion and chaos reigned, and the Dark Ages came. Amid the darkness, however, one true Light shone—The Christian Church. In its monasteries it kept the lamp of learning burning; it helped to preserve order; it sent its missionaries among the barbarians, thus softening their cruel, savage ways; it provided relief for the poor and ransomed captives; and it tried to promote peace between the many contending kings and lords of the feudal age. More than that, it symbolized the unity of Christendom. But alas, in the midst of these mighty works, the church itself became so corrupt that it needed reformation.

In spite of His disappointment with the Christian Church, the patient God continued His great work. Nor did He confine His endeavors to Christians or to Christendom alone. In every land He continued to stimulate men, and He carefully nurtured every tender plant which showed signs of promise. In desert Arabia, while Europe groped in the darkness of superstitious night, Mohammed heard the Voice of God. Though his vision was dim, compared to that of Jesus, yet he too caught glimpses of truth and out of his efforts a new religion arose. This new religion in turn provided the basis for a new civilization. This Moslem culture also served to preserve and even to develop the ancient learning. The bloody conflicts between Christian and Moslem, known as the Crusades, were in many ways calamitous and sorely grieved the Creator and tried His patience. But even out of these cruel wars He was able to bring good. For not only did the Crusades lead to the downfall of feudalism,

not only did they help clear the ground for something better, but the Western Christian contact with the higher Moslem culture so quickened Europe that a new age slowly dawned.

Thus a seemingly decadent Europe took on new life. The Renaissance came. The flame that had been lighted in old Hellas burned again. The Reformation came to purify and quicken the corrupt church. The thunders of Israel's prophets were heard again. America, a new virgin continent, was discovered, giving rise to new nations with new hopes and dreams. Science opened new vistas of a vaster universe than men had ever imagined, and though it shattered the faith of some, in the end it made way for a greater and loftier faith, free from petty national and parochial limitations. God was seen as far greater than men had ever before dreamed.

In spite of real gains, however, there were two things which especially pained the Heart of God: the slave trade and the many wars which the invention of gunpowder had made increasingly more destructive and terrible. He was also grieved by the human exploitation which followed the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless, He continued to impress men, with the vision first seen by the Hebrew Prophets, of a righteous social order in which justice and peace are supreme. In answer to the challenge, new prophets, such as George Fox, arose to make men aware of the iniquity of the slave traffic and of war. Democracy arose with its passion for freedom and its emphasis on the value and dignity of the individual, and socialism with its love for economic justice. Here Amos and Isaiah spoke again. Nothing cheered God more than the abolition of the slave traffic, the beginnings of the peace movement, and the dawn of a real world consciousness. The rise of communism as man's pro-



test against economic exploitation and oppression gave Him many misgivings, for often the remedy proved worse than the disease. But even this crude and intolerant cry for justice God made use of to quicken the conscience of men.

Finally the twentieth century dawned with greater hopes and greater fears than mankind had ever known before. Cursed by two world wars and with the danger of a third hanging over us like a sword of Damocles, at times we almost lose hope. Damned by many disasters, at times it is easy to surrender to fatalism. But the vision of history in the large, the attempt to look at it as a whole, as God does, cannot but cheer us. Seen in this light we cannot but believe with the Prophets of Israel, with St. Augustine, with Hegel, and with Toynbee that it is the expression of a great plan and purpose, that it is essentially the work of the Eternal Spirit Who in the dim beginning hovered over chaos. Not in some faraway heaven beyond the stars, but here in our midst, He sits at the loom of time, weaving His great design, carefully eliminating the error and evil due to human sin or the curse of Necessity, and thus the pattern grows in meaning, significance, and beauty as the ages roll.

Moreover we may truly believe that never before, except when He brooded over chaos, or over the Christ on the cross, has the great Spirit been more anxious than in our own day. Human failure to respond to the Divine stimulus may bring the curse of an atomic war and may bring down the curtain on our civilization. Nevertheless such movements as the Ecumenical Movement among the churches, the growing recognition of the values inherent in non-Christian religions, the reconciliation between science and religion, the growing spiritual restlessness, the developing social conscience both within the church and without, the establishment of the United Nations and the increasing de-

mand for world government growing out of a sense of the danger which mankind faces—all these are causes for optimism and are evidences of plan and purpose within history, that God is still at work among us, that He has not yet cast us off in despair.<sup>12</sup> If the refusal to respond to the Divine stimulus spells our doom and the doom of our civilization, how much more will the right response mean our salvation! In fact, it is within our power in our day to set the pattern, perhaps for ten thousand years. Thus the final meaning of history does not spell despair but hope. God has done and is willing to do His part both in time and eternity, and in the final analysis He wins the victory. But our fate and the fate of our civilization He has left in our hands. What the future will be like depends largely upon us.

<sup>12</sup> Unless, however, the conflict between East and West is resolved soon, and by peaceful means, these days of grace may come to an end; the curtain might come down quickly upon this, our act, in the great Drama of History.

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